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Edward H. Davis

And the Indians of the Southwest United States and Northwest Mexico

A harvest of photographs, sketches and unpublished manuscripts of the indefatigable collector of artifacts of these border Indians

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[Title Page]

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Section V

The Seri Indian

Unfinished Book Manuscript

War Chief of the Seris

The Pelican Skin Robe

175 131 *Three centuries ago they were a friendly people living along the banks of the Sonora River from Hermosillo to where the flow of water sinks into the marshy banks along the coast of the Gulf of California.*

175 717 *The great Padre of the Pimas, Eusebio Francisco Kino, first visited the Seris in 1685, and found them "a very gentle people." After a short preachment to them he noted that "With very great insistency they begged me to remain with them and baptize them saying they would give me horses, fish and many products of the country, and that they would build me a house and a church. On three different days I said Mass in their country."*

The Padre could not remain but two years later (1687), he sent Father Adan Lily to them. Lily established a mission---Santa Maria del Popula---on the banks of the River near what is now Hermosillo. The Seris remained faithful to the Padres when the whole country rose in revolt some years later.

175 [13] *The withering hand of time worked against them, however. They were pushed farther and farther down onto the barren lands along the gulf coast until, finally, in a fierce and desperate retreat out into the sea and onto the desert Island of Tiburon. The swift and deadly channel between the Island and the Sonoran mainland gave them protection. They retrogressed through the centuries into a fierce and, perhaps, cannibalistic tribe.*

114 [23] *As late as 1922, when Edward Davis first visited Tiburon Island, a man was putting his life on the line when he stepped on the Island. But perhaps the quality of the man had something to do with it. As did Father Kino, Edward Davis was able to make friends of them.*

The following manuscript is an incompleted book on the Seris which was found among his papers.

[pp. 6-138 not processed]

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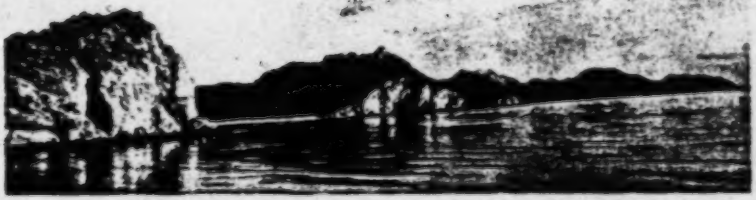

Tiburon Island - 1936

Unfinished Book Manuscript

114 At the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation in New York City where I was staying temporarily _____, I was asked by Mr. Heye where I would like to go on my next collecting trip for the Museum. I had already covered the whole of southern half of Arizona and had made thorough collections from Pima, Papago, Maricopa, Apache, Hualapai and other tribes, and had also covered Southern California and its deserts.

For many years I had read every scrap of information about the treacherous Seri Indians of the Island of Tiburon---off Mexico, and was greatly intrigued with these wild primitive natives. My theory has always been that the farther away from civilization a tribe is located, the better chance to secure original or aboriginal material, so I asked Mr. Heye if he had anything from the Seri Indians of Tiburon Island, and he said: "Not a thing, nor any other museum."

"Well, I think I'll go to Tiburon in March," I said.

He said, "I wouldn't advise it. You know their reputation. No white man landing on that mysterious Island has ever returned. They are the most treacherous Indians in North America, and Tiburon Island is a good place to stay away from."

114 Nevertheless, I went to Hermosillo, capital of the State of Sonora,
123 Mexico, and there I met and engaged Roberto Thomson, whose father had
[115] treated with kindness some of the Seris who had reached his ranch, and he, Roberto, thought we could land on the Island and, by considerate treatment, make friends with these wild *Tiburones*. It seemed as if we were flying into the face of certain death from their reputation, but we met these people, and by gifts and fair treatment, we became good friends, and from that time in 1922 to the present, that friendship has endured unbroken.

I have the absolute freedom of the Island, and have visited there at least six times. I have been through the Island on all its coasts and am familiar with its wild inhabitants.

123 As a concrete result of that first trip to Tiburon, I secured a
115 *balsa* (boat) made of *carrizo* canes lashed together with native fibre,
501 which *balsa* Mr. Heye said it was the finest one in North America.

[226] This *balsa* was given to me without hesitation, although it furnished one or two families with sea food.

115 I wish to pay tribute to Senor Roberto Thomson who has been my constant companion, friend, guide and interpreter during the past twenty years, on all my trips to Tiburon and various parts of Mexico. I found him absolutely dependable, using excellent judgment in critical situations. He was honest, fair, intelligent, looking out constantly for my safety and comfort always, enduring hardships cheerfully. A better all-round out-door man I have never seen equaled. In short, he is a real *hombre*, and my *simpatico*.

13 Tiburon, or *Shark Island*, long noted for its evil reputation as
181 the home of the most savage and treacherous Indians of North America,
193 lies in latitude 29°north and 112°30' west longitude, in the Gulf of California. It is shaped like a parallelogram about thirty-five miles long and eighteen to twenty miles wide, and lies parallel to the coast of Sonora, Mexico, of which, no doubt, at some remote period, it once formed a part.

It is separated from the mainland, for the most part, by a strait
[127] called *El Infernillo*, or The Little Hell, through which the rising tides pour a resistless flood. It is a desert island and supports a desert arboreal vegetation which includes several varieties of the cactus family and the *mesquite, palo verde, palo fierro, torote, palo blanco, ocotillo* and others. The giant *saguaro, sarbuezo* and *pitahalla (pit-a-haya)* cactus are found here also.

Two desert ranges run lengthwise of the Island, which, on its westward or windward side, terminate in sea-worn cliffs against whose ramparts dash the heavy breakers of the Gulf, and on its eastern side, by long alluvial aprons from the foot of the mountains, sloping gently down to the lovely shell-strewn beaches. From this side the foot of the mountains lies from two to five miles distant. On this, the leeward side of Tiburon, the sea is much calmer, and often, in the early morning, it is as smooth and placid as a lake, reflecting each rosy, lavender and purple tint of the rugged Sierra Seri along the Sonoran coast, as in a mirror. The exquisite loveliness of marvelous sunrises over the pure limpid waters of the *Estrecho Infernillo* is mystical.

134 The soil is loose and sandy, unsuitable for cultivation, and im-
241 possible for producing domestic crops of any
142 kind.

000 possible for producing domestic crops of any kind. There is no water
312 for irrigation, and drinking water is very scarce, rising in only a few parts of the Island in places known only to the Indians.

648 For centuries these nomads of the wastes have borne an evil repu-
[91] tation as killers and cannibals, and many an expedition to the Island for trade or exploration has never left its beautiful shores. Lured away from their boats by friendly gestures of the Indians, every last man has been killed by arrow or rifle and the expedition never heard from. No survivor has ever returned to relate his experience and, up to the time of my visit, a man risked his life to go among the Seris on their Island.

Time after time, for four hundred years, the Spaniards, and later the Mexicans, have tried to exterminate them. They have been ambushed, hunted, killed on sight for years; diseases have decimated them: they have been the Ishmaelites among the native tribes of Mexico, with every man's hand against them. Now only a small remnant survives.

[13] They have also taken heavy toll of those who have invaded their territory, which at one time extended from Altar on the north to Guaymas on the south, and from Hermosillo to the coast. When hard pressed, they retired to their Island sanctuary where, deep in the rugged ranges, they have defied pursuit. They are strong, brave, neither asking nor giving quarter in battle---men of marvelous endurance, tireless walkers, swift runners, wonderful trackers.

Within the last few years the Government has definitely set aside Tiburon as their exclusive home and sanctuary, with a strip along the mainland as their hunting and fishing ground, and where they can harvest the fruits of the giant cacti without fear of being killed. No person is allowed on this Island without special permission from the Governor of Sonora, or their Superintendent and devoted friend, Roberto Thomson. The Government has declared a permanent closed season on Seris.

175 As to the reputation of these nomads of the wastes of being can-
648 nibals, I quote the following extract from the *Life of Bill Fain:*

266 After I had been in Yuma some time, a Yuma school teacher asked what I knew about Tiburon Island and the Seris. He said he had heard there was gold on the Island and he in company with a sailor intended to go down there. I said "Partner, I have been at the head of the Gulf several times, and interviewed many Mexican sailors and fishermen. These Seris are murderers and cannibals and my advice is, don't go, for as sure as God made little apples, you and your friend will make a fine feast for the *Tiburones.*"

He said the sailor would manage the boat and they would prospect on the Island and pack the gold out. And besides, they were going unarmed and trust themselves to the tender mercies of the most treacherous Indians in North America. I told him, "My advice is to stay just as far away from that Island as you can, if you want to teach school any longer." My advice was thrown away.

Some weeks later several mining men in skirting the coast opposite Tiburon, came across a place where the Seris had evidently been feasting on human flesh,

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near the narrow channel called *Infernillo*. They knew about the missing school teacher and sailor and without doubt this was the place where they had been eaten. There were the bones of two human beings, and there seemed to be a sort of cross, with hands severed at the wrists, nailed to the ends of the cross with big spikes, with a piece of leather, about as big as a dollar, to keep the nails from pulling through. The hands were from a white man, and many scattered papers from a valise near by, with the man's name stamped on it, was ample proof that the remains were those of the Yuma teacher and this sailor friend. The holes cut out of the valise fitted the leather washers. Even the bones were broken to extract the marrow. The teacher never showed up and everything happened just as I predicted. This was about 1893.

About a year after this, five other men left Yuma in a boat, called the *Examiner*, for Tiburon. Clark was an old frontiersman, O'Brien was a good man too, but not so old at the game; Charley Cowles was a mining man and the two *Examiner* reporters wanted to write up the Seris and the Island and hunt deer. All were fully armed. I gave Clark and O'Brien the same advice as I gave the school master and said on no account to all desert the boat; for O'Brien to make some excuse and stay in the large boat with a shot gun loaded with buckshot and land the reporters with the small skiff. I told Clark not to land but to stay in the skiff. I said they were all flying in the face of sure death once they landed. Charley disembarked at the mouth of a river and left for the interior.

When the boat got close to the Island, it was anchored according to my instructions and Clark and the reporters got in the skiff and were rowed close to shore, when the reporters jumped out and waded. Twelve or fifteen wild natives had emerged from the brush and were making signs of friendship and they shook hands all around with the reporters. One of the men could talk Spanish and he asked about deer and one of the Indians pointed to the mountains of the interior and said, "*'Si Senor, bastante venado.*" So they all started inland and were soon concealed by the brush.

Of course, even two men fully armed and good gun men, would stand no chance with that number of wild natives.

Soon after they had disappeared around the point of a hill, the men in the boats heard the crack of a gun, followed by the scream of a man in mortal anguish. The men never showed up and Clark started for the big boat in his skiff. About this time, a great buck Indian started out in a dugout canoe to cut him off. O'Brien had kept himself concealed until the Indian came within range, when he raised up and threatened to shoot, and waved him back.

He went back all right, and as soon as Clark came aboard, they raised the anchor and sailed south to Guaymas, sold the boat and returned by train. They gave me the details as here recorded. Friends of the newspapermen took the matter up with the authorities at Washington and they had some diplomatic exchanges with the Mexican Government. Mexico answered: "If you don't want your Americans killed, keep them away from Tiburon."

[*Life of Bill Fain*, unpublished manuscript from the Davis collection.]

About 1893 George Porter and John Johnson fitted out the small sloop *World* in San Diego, to go down in the Gulf for shells and curios, and trade with the Seris. They came to grief in the same way. The men were lured ashore by the friendly attitude of the natives, led up the beach, then retreat cut off and they were shot down and "eaten by the Seris."

Dr. [W J] McGee of the Smithsonian Institute of Washington, in 1895, visited the Island with a party of scientists to study the

[text continues on p. 146]

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Seri Indians

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175 698 266 Indians. Dr. McGee, confirming Bill Fain's story of the disappearance of Robinson and Logan, the San Francisco newspapermen, secured the facts from a Seri who spoke Spanish, as follows:

> On reaching the Island, Robinson and Logan asked the natives if there were any deer to be shot and receiving an affirmative reply, they started for the interior toward the mountain with several Seris as escort, leaving the two other men with the boats. On the face of it, this was a most foolhardy performance and Robinson actually loaned his rifle to one of the Seris, who accompanied him. The Seri shot Logan in the back and wounded Robinson who called for help. In trying to escape he stumbled and fell and the Indians beat his brains out with rocks.

On the Gulf Coast, this list of killed and of course eaten, could be greatly enlarged and leads to the fact that, up to recent years, no stranger---American, Mexican or Indian---could land on Tiburon and live. Ever since Sonora was settled, two or three hundred years ago, the Island has borne a sinister reputation and up to recent years, it has lived up to its reputation. Even now, no one is allowed to land on the Island without permission of the Governor or the Superintendent.

[181] The Island of Tiburon is isolated, its approaches guarded by deserts and sea, and its people the wildest and most primitive race in North America---every man's hand against them, and they against every body.

175 648 266 114 Dr. McGee's investigations in 1895 failed to convict the Seris of cannibalism or of eating any part of either whites or Indians, killed on the Island or killed in battle. This reputation of cannibalism is prevalent in Mexico as well as in the United States, but the charge has never been proven.

It is true, they eat the flesh of animals raw as well as partially cooked, and that may have given rise to this gruesome reputation, but my own investigations covering several visits on the Island and on the Sonoran coast, failed to convince me that they had eaten human flesh. They told me themselves they had not, and if all reports of cannibalism by the Seris were traced back to their source, they would end in surmise or guesswork. No one, so far as I have been able to find, has actually seen a Seri eat human flesh. Until such a witness can be produced, the Seri remains unconvicted.

Let us examine the so-called evidence of the mining men, as quoted by Bill Fain: the finding of a white man's hands spiked to a cross, and the schoolmaster's papers scattered on the Gulf Coast of Sonora. This evidence is too circumstantial. The discs of leather even fitted the holes in the bag.

In the first place, nails are scarce in Sonora, and no Seri at that time would risk his life to procure nails or spikes at any ranch. Nearly all woods in that region are hard and would almost certainly turn a nail. The Seris had no axes to chop trees to make crosses, and

175 if they were as hungry then as they are today, they would not stop to
648 spike a man up preparatory to serving him. Their only tools then were
266 rocks to use as hammers and hoop iron for knives, and these are in
114 universal use today.

[412] There is no doubt that the men were killed, but I think these mining men purposely exaggerated their findings, if any.

648 There is no doubt that the Seris were brave fighters, treacherous
721 murderers, sparing neither men, women or children on their raids,
727 killing ruthlessly. But there is one charge which cannot be brought against them, which cannot be said of many tribes north of the border. So far as I could find out, they never tortured nor scalped.

648 The Seris never took prisoners and they never inter-married with
721 other tribes, so their strain is pure.

727 There was one exception. Sixty or seventy years ago, the Seri
563 Chief Coyote Iguana and his band of warriors held up the stage between Hermosillo and Guaymas, and killed all except a handsome Spanish girl of the better class. This girl, Coyote Iguana made his wife and by her raised a family. One granddaughter still survived in 1924, and while more attractive than the general run of Seri, her complexion was fully as dark.

800 The Seris, Ishmaelites among the native tribes of Mexico---the most fascinating Indians in North America!

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123 *Reception Committee, Tiburon Island - 1935*

115 On the twenty-fifth of April, nineteen twenty-two, I engaged the services of Roberto Thompson, who with his father and grandfather

[text continues on p. 149]

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Rafael Ysabel with Gila monster - 1922

[123 [115] before him, has been a friend of the Seris for years. It was his father who brought McGee to Tiburon in 1895, and in many ways they have shown kindness to the Seris.

[122] I hired an auto-truck for fifty dollars to take the necessary people and supplies. These supplies consisted of some fine-tooth combs, needles, thread, one bolt of white muslin, 150-pounds of flour, panoche, saws, nails, harmonicas, little round mirrors, fish twine, hooks, 2-bits and other things.

We left at 6:30 a.m. With us was the driver Ricardo, his friend Rafael Ysabel, son of an ex-governor of Sonora. When we reached Bob's ranch, *El Providencia*, five or more miles out, we added a one-eyed Mexican and Bob's brother.

After a simple dinner at the ranch house we drove across the mouth of the Sonora river, a broad, flat alluvial plain probably four or five miles across. We circled about and turned north, stopping at the edge of a broad shallow bay. The tide was down and the shore was slimy mud and filled at places with sharp-edged clam and oyster shells. There were oyster flats at the edge of the mud, so Roberto and the Mexican waded out and secured enough of them for supper.

[136] During the day we ran close to a Gila monster, a horrid looking black and orange mottled fat lizard who waddled along. Rafael held his head with a rifle, reached down and caught him in back of the head, and held him up. He hissed like a snake and bears a bad reputation.

[133] The country was flat and the road pretty good. Detached mountains we passed during the day and one range called *Siete Cerros*, Seven Mountains, with peaks all in one row, reached for fifteen or twenty miles. We passed a few ranches where the people were pumping water from wells or hauling in the old turn-table way with a mule and rawhide buckets. Then we made camp, got everything ready for an early start the next day and turned in.

At dawn three men took the boat with all our traps and groceries and fifteen gallons of fresh water, and Rafael and I walked up to the point to meet it. Louis and the driver and truck returned to the ranch. The weeds and ground were very wet and we came to some sloughs filled with soft ooze. These were impossible to cross, so we went around them and then decided to strike for the ocean side and go along a sand bank. This we did, and when we reached the end we saw the boat waiting for us half a mile or more across a great flat.

[133] The ocean view was grand. A great rock, *Alcatraz Island*, protruded from the sea a short distance out, on which countless cormorants roost and raise their young. Bob often gathers their eggs.

We reached the boat and climbed in and pushed off into deep water. There was no wind and the tide was part way against us, but we rowed, three of us, for many many miles. We landed in a small cove, drew up

[text continues on p. 15]

10: Davis E-5 (1922-ca. 1939) 1968 NU31 Seri NU31

Roberto Thomson waving white bandera as signal of peace. In the Gulf - Sonora. April 26, 1972

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Pulling the boat up the beach above high tide - Kino Bay and Alcatraz Island - 1936

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123 the boat and took dinner. Afterward, we pulled out into the Gulf and skirted the coast, rowing for miles. We passed great red mountains with the sea beating against their rugged breasts, hollowing out deep caverns; then sandy bluffs with mountains receding, but the horizon was always notched with rugged, pinnacled desert ranges.

We landed for the night on a sandy point and made camp. After our supper two fires were built, Roberto's signal that he was on hand. [202] Also a white scarf was tied to a long pole as a signal of friendship. No answering signal appeared. Probably the people were on the opposite side of the Island.

At sunset the sea became calm as a pond and the mountains on Tiburon in the distance turned purple and lavender. The sea reflected all the sky and mountain colors like a mirror.

The next morning we got an early start and it required our united strength to push the boat down to the water as it was low tide. The beach was strewn with various shells and a lot of colored pumice stone which had drifted in from seventy-five miles north, where there are some pumice hills near the sea.

The nearest point of Tiburon was only one and a half miles distant, a short row across. The water was pure green, indicating a shallow sea. [361] We rounded the point and rowed into a bay and then to the head of the bay where there were a few huts called *Rancheria Tinajanita*, or Little Tanks. The water was so shallow in places we had to get out and push the boat a long way out and walk up a long muddy beach over shells and a sort of coral that bruised and cut our bare feet, so that we went as if walking on eggs.

342 The rancheria was built on the shore with no shade; each hut facing
361 the water. The huts were very crude---the frames of *carriso* reed and ocotillo, covered with coarse brush and blankets of dried seaweed.
[35] Around the bottoms, or sides, of each hut were piled sea turtle shells three and a half feet high and two and a half feet wide. Over these were piled seaweed and brush, not fastened. Round about were turtle bones and shells, and sea shells, bones and anything that contained meat.

This was just a temporary camp of about eight huts.

123 We left this camp, raised the sail, which consisted of several
202 flour sacks sewed together, and lay in the bottom of the dug-out, while the one-eyed Mexican steered with a paddle. Before leaving, Ricardo left his sign---a sign agreed between him and the Seris. Since he and his family had been so kind to them, they would never harm him or kill his horses and cattle. He erected a stick with a rag to call attention, made a circle with his heel, and inside the circle made the tracks of his right bare foot and right hand.

123 At the bow we carried the white banner always to signify peace.
361 We crossed the bay to a sandy point and came upon another small

[text continues on p. 153]

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Giant Saguaro

Pirahalla

123 rancheria of about ten or fifteen huts, half tumbled down, all facing
361 the sea and surrounded by turtle shells and deer bones, and sea shells. Things were dropped wherever they ate. This rancheria was deserted also.

We set sail again and landed on a sandy beach near another deserted rancheria called *Palo Fierro*. We hauled the boat way up and took out all our things and carried them up to the huts. In this place there were twenty-one huts---sometimes three built together. Many of them were in a good state of preservation. They were all in a long row with bleaching bones and turtle shells on all sides. From the inside of one hut I counted thirteen turtle shells around the base. There must have been about a hundred turtle shells here, and a few land tortoises.

123 There were two or three fragments of painted parts of a boat---
[64] probably remains of a boat belonging to seven fishermen who got drunk and landed here, and were all killed by the Seris two years ago. Six months ago a single Seri was captured by some Mexican fishermen and killed in reprisal.

As the wind increased it kicked up an ugly sea and we decided to camp over night. As we were reduced to about six gallons of water, Roberto suggested we take two empty five-gallon cans and go for water. I had offered to stay with the boat but was told the Seris would kill me if they found me alone.

[312] A Seri had told Roberto to follow a certain trail from the rancheria and go between the mountains and he would find a *pozo*, or well, not far away. Ricardo left his private sign and the five of us marched away, following a well-worn trail. For the full distance broken shards of ollas lined the trail at short distances, so we knew we were on
137 the right trail. Brush began at the sea shore and we passed various
123 kinds of desert vegetation---several kinds of cactus, especially the *sarbueso*. This starts with a single great trunk two or three feet in diameter, and then branches out like a vase, running up fifteen to twenty or more great columns like the *saguaro*. They were thirty or forty feet high. In some of these were piled a great accumulation of sticks and trash ten feet high or more, and on the top where the sea eagle makes its nest. There were a number of these.

Then we came to the *pitahalla*, *cholla*, *ocotillo*, and others, and the strange *terote* tree. This tree is the *Bursura Microphylla*, and has an odor like turpentine. It is a fat, dropsical tree like stuffed sausage, with crooked ungainly branches coming out at all angles. There are three varieties---the *terote colorado*, *blanco*, and *negro*, according to the color of the cut bark. Another strange tree was the *palo blanco*. Then there was the *palo verde*, *palo fierro* and *mesquite*. The *mesquite* was rare.

123 A number of signs were marked in the sand. We could not translate
[212] them. We walked single file, rifles in hand, and revolvers handy.

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Alverto Mendoza and Lupe Astorga getting water from cactus - used for cooking

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Child leading Petra - blind woman, Kino Bay - 1936

123 Mile after mile. We got very dry and had almost given up finding the
[133] water. We had gone up a sandy wash for miles, barren arid mountains terminating in regular saw tooth pinnacles on all sides, some of beautiful red rock---red as blood; some gray and some lavender.

312 At last we came to the water hole which had also been frequented
123 by coyotes, skunks and other animals, and their flavor was easy to taste. But we had ceased to be critical long ago. The hole was really a crooked shaft and led down crude steps worn into the rock for ten or twelve feet. It had been dug by clam shells and bones and sticks, and may have dated back many years. Part of it was through rock and it was a work of great patience to dig with such primitive tools.

123 At the foot, a seepage came through the sand and formed a shallow pool from which, in the semi-darkness, we dipped water and filled our cans. After a rest, all partook of a generous drink. It took us two and a quarter hours---six miles to go there, and we were probably the only white men who had ever been there. I am glad I went for the experience, but we were all completely exhausted on reaching camp. Ricardo and the Mexican carried the cans of water six miles on a stick balanced over the shoulder. Roberto left his sign along the trail. We slept in the Seri huts, all tired out. My feet were tender from walking on the sharp shells and my shoes had shrunk from being wet in salt water, and that pained my feet greatly by cramping them too much.

We heard many interesting tales about the Seris: their wonderful endurance, their susceptibility to disease, their marvelous feats of tracking and swimming, their habit of getting food only when necessary and laying up none ahead, and other queer customs.

The breaking of dawn brought a marvelously beautiful sunrise. It was very low tide and the boat was stranded nearly two hundred feet from water. The sky and sea were crimson and the mountains purple on the Sonora side. The sea was calm, without a ripple, and mirrored every peak and color and made a picture of indescribable beauty.

We ate a hasty breakfast and strained ourselves to the utmost to move the boat. It slowly slid over the grass and shells to the water's edge, and then we had to push it out seventy-five feet in the water to get it deep enough to float. A slight breeze was blowing, so we raised the sail and rounded the point and headed across for another point, across a stretch of water five or six miles.

[202] At last we saw a few huts and as we neared shore we saw two men with rifles. We waved the white banner, laid our rifles handy, fixed our revolvers, and ran the boat ashore. The men had darted back into the brush as experience had told them to beware of strangers. Roberto and his brother Nene leaped out, leaving their rifles, seized the white flag, ran after the men and called to them and said they were friends who had come to see them. They recognized Roberto, returned to the brush shelters, left their rifles and came to the boat bare-

[text continues on p. 157]

Blind Seri Indian, 1939
Best paddler we had

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Candelario completes his decoration
one of our paddlers - 1938

123 handed to show their friendliness.

142 One was a young man with rather pleasant features, his braided
281 hair hanging below his shoulders. His name was Antonio Herrera. The
133 other was a wild-looking specimen called Ramon Blanco. His hair was a
[302] tangled mat with a short braid behind, suspicious black piercing eyes,
[411] long sparse moustache and chin-beard hiding a broad cruel mouth. He wore the remnants of an old sweater, a short dirty kilt, or skirt, nearly to his knees, a belt full of cartridges, mostly empty, and a long knife in a rawhide scabbard.

123 The young man had been baptized and given a name by Roberto, who
[705] had acted as godfather or *patrona*, many years ago. He wore a hat,
[291] jacket, and pants of blue denim, and *guaraches*, or sandals of rawhide.

We shook hands all around and then they called and halloed in the brush and soon three women and a lot of children, wild and half-
[415] clothed, filed into camp. The women were tall, gaunt, unkempt, ragged
[402] and barefooted, paying us not the slightest notice. They were bearing
[422] on their heads large baskets filled with all their earthly possessions---cooking ollas, scraps of cloth, pieces of turtle meat, bone
[854] brads, hair brushes, and odds and ends. They carried, also, an infant
[231] or two wrapped in odd bits of rags. Several gaunt dogs followed in their wake.

342 In all, three families came trailing in, removed their household equipment from their heads and resumed their interrupted and primitive
[592] housekeeping. Each family occupied its apartment in the row of brush shelters, separated from each other only by brush partitions with a total lack of privacy. These shelters, always open to the sea, serve as shade from the fierce rays of the sun, and also as windbreaks, but
[361] are no protection from infrequent rains. They are occupied only for a brief period and then their nomadic tenants move on to fresh *cahuama*, or sea turtle range.

123 Soon, a third man arrived while we were near the huts, Manuel
[142] Encina. He was a man of sixty-five, gray hair and mustache, seamed features, and not evil looking. He was out of breath. He had gone for water to the same water hole where we had been yesterday, struck our tracks, had left his water cans and hurried back to warn his people. He was greatly relieved to find friends.

Since he had gone for water, inquiry revealed there had been no water in camp for two days, and six adults and one girl of thirteen and six children were thirsty. We gladly gave them one of our five-
[225] gallon cans of water and they were very grateful. They had caught a
[262] sea turtle the day before and gave us some turtle steaks which looked like beef or mutton.

312 As the camp was without water and we were running short, the young
402 man and Encina offered to get some. Each took a *palanca*, or short
123 shoulder pole with knotched ends, fitted empty five-gallon cans in

123 312 [482] nets of twisted fiber, hooked the nets in the ends of the notched stick and started off nine or ten miles to the water hole in the heart of the mountains.

Water carried so far over loose, sandy soil, dodging cactus, threading a devious way among the *talus* thrown off the cliffs and slopes of canyon walls, with the water-bearer barefoot, acquires a value absolutely unknown to the man who draws an unlimited supply from a faucet.

The two men were gone six hours and when they returned they were almost staggering under the heavy loads of water, each man carrying at least one hundred and ten pounds of water, as the cans were full. In addition, one man had a canteen full.

The thirsty people drank sparingly, and a little Seri maid poured some of the precious liquid into a cooking olla for a thirsty dog. After the dog had lapped sufficient to allay his thirst, she carefully poured the residue back into the can, never losing a drop. One drop of water could not be spared after that arduous trip.

484 147 648 Bob says a man goes to Hermosillo occasionally and returns to the coast, ninety miles, with two to five cans of *mescal*. It takes probably four days to do it, but it is a wonderful feat of endurance. He said about thirty years ago a woman walked the ninety miles during one night, afoot, and reported to the Government House when it was opened at nine in the morning that about fifty of her people had been shot by Roberto's uncle at various times. This uncle was a very hard rough man and the Seris were fond of his mares and steers for meat, and used to steal, so he began shooting a goodly number. Fearing a man messenger would be shot, as men were frequently shot while going along the road, they sent a woman.

Ysabel was Governor at the time. Judgment was rendered against the uncle, and it is probable that a hanging squad would have been sent out to execute him. The Governor, a great friend of the family, sent for him, and he rode ninety miles at night on horseback and was saved with the Governor's help.

Roberto saw twelve Seris pack meat from two mares, two steers and two yearling heifers, for four or five miles to their boats. Their endurance and strength is phenomenal. The question naturally arises, "Why are not burros used by the Seris on the Island to ride and pack, as they are by their Mexican neighbors on the mainland?" It has been [482] tried, but things were reversed; the Seris packed the burros around in their stomachs.

261 262 Roberto said: "These people, living on the verge of starvation, never having a continuous food supply, would kill and eat every burro, and it is a common thing on the mainland, if a cow or horse dies, and Seris are in the neighborhood, they will try to beat the buzzards to it. They will gorge in times of plenty, and when food is scarce they

[text continues on p. 160]

Seri - wild boy - 1924

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[297]

Seri child

261 will exist on very small rations, bear burdens, and walk long dis-
262 tances. Their food is anything that walks, flies, crawls or swims,
[252] and they eat it raw with the same relish that we eat it cooked. There is but one thing they will not eat; they draw the line on the Gila monster. They are the most perfect type of human being adapted to desert conditions that exists today. Convey them blindfolded many miles into the heart of the desert, empty-handed, remove their blinders, and they will find both food and water where others would perish. The Papagos and Yaquis do almost as well."

302 We gave the women a small bag of flour and three or four cubes of
[123] sugar around, and the men three packets of tobacco each and two boxes of matches. Matches with them are very precious and are rarely used. Rather than use a match a woman came over to our fire and borrowed some coals to rebuild her fire. From this point the nearest matches are a good deal over one hundred and twenty miles distant, so they have to economize in every thing.

422 Each rag is valuable, and flour, sugar, coffee and rifle shells
[434] are absolutely priceless. While they know money, it has no value here.
[437] Only commodities go here. The most highly prized things are boards to
[389] make boats and rifle shells to get game and protect themselves. All empty shells are saved, the primer punched out, straightened, a match head put in, a little pinch of powder on top, the shell filled up, a long bullet inserted, the shell pinched tight, and a fresh set of ammunition is made.

142 The women and children certainly did look wild. Their hair was
291 frowsy and unkempt, their skirts and waists a patchwork of dirty rags
302 coming just below the knees; their features seamed and hard and cruel. Their complexion was very dark. They had no under garments. The children wore only a dirty shirt coming a little below their thighs, and even that is ragged. One or two of the women had a dirty bandanna over their heads. How I wished I could have seen them in their ancient, picturesque pelican-skin kilts!

302 I happened to witness the operation of a Seri beauty parlor. A
[924] mother brushed the hair of her thirteen-year-old daughter with a brush
[283] made from the fibrous roots of a certain grass tied together with
[515] sinew. During the operation if she came across a *piojo*, and she found several, she plucked him away from his feeding ground and dropped him in the fire.

The hair neatly brushed, the mother then mixed paint in a small vessel and with a tiny stick painted a bright blue design under the eyes and across the cheeks and nose, and then she added narrow white stripes, which, contrasting with the blue and the dark skin, produced a very striking effect. This paint is easily removed and the women often paint and remove three different face designs in one day.

304 I did not see tattoo work on either men or women, nor did they
301 wear ceremonial feathers as did our western Indians.

000 wear ceremonial feathers as did our western Indians. I saw no skin or
164 cutaneous disease, or evidence of tuberculosis or of trachoma---the curse of our Indians.

142 One boy-child of five years was a handsome child---fat, round,
302 sturdy, with roving great black eyes, large thick lips, a picture of
[241] perfect health. He was almost naked. His hair was done in a pigtail
[857] with a red string braided into it. His face like all the others was dirty, but he waded into the shallow water with a short spear and I saw him catch two crabs with his little harpoon. The water did not bother his face.

415 They had no plates or eating tools, except large deep clam shells,
412 cast up by the sea, which served as cups and dippers. Their long, keen
264 belt knives were used for cutting, carving or skinning, and always the
[258] fingers for eating. They gathered in a circle around an olla of seeds of long grass growing on the sea bottom prepared by winnowing, parching and grinding, and then cooked with turtle oil. Each one dipped his or her fingers into the olla and conveyed them to the mouth without losing a drop, and licked them off with great relish.

231 The dogs eat with the family. There were six or seven half-starved
264 ones. If someone picked up a piece of turtle flipper the dog often took the first lick at it, bit off a piece or licked it before it reached the owner's mouth. The dogs were not punished. They were just slapped to keep them out of the pots.

123 We had a great time that evening in Seriland. The young man played
534 his violin. This consisted of a hollow box cut out of a *palo verde*
[824] tree, and a piece of pine about sixteen inches long; terminating in a
[283] hollow where a single peg was fitted. The one string was twisted deer
[237] sinew, and the bridge was a small round clam shell at the far end. The
[533] bow was a small bent stick and some black horsehair. On the handle was a wad of rosin fastened underneath. By fingering this string a few weak squeaky notes were made, and this was the classical music of the Seris.

Manuel Encina seized his gourd rattle and began chanting. Herrera tapped a tin can and I beat on an inverted basket and the orchestra
535 was in full swing. A young girl, Rosa, dragged out a turtle shell and
123 standing on it began to dance. This dance consisted of stepping up and down quickly with each foot alternately, and this stamping, barefooted, emitted a hollow sound. Every once in a while I let out an
[126] Indian yell which pleased the Seris very much. For two hours they had a real swell time. We took one flashlight of the proceeding.

[342] Each family was in their hut, which afforded very slight shelter
[362] as they were only partially roofed over and the sides were broken
[354] down in places. The huts were all adjoining and each had a little
[361] campfire, which did not give much illumination, so the dancing was in semi-darkness.

[text contineus on p. 163]

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Carrying firewood

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Seri basket maker - 1934

semi-darkness.

Soon two little boys joined the dance, stepping up and down in the sand. Lighted only by the flickering flames of the driftwood fires on the shores of this mysterious and dreaded isle, the soft murmur of the sea as a refrain to the wild chanting, the weird circling of glittering eyes, and wild dark faces, presented a scene of uncanny and savage fascination witnessed by white men probably for the first time.

After each stanza there was a short rest. The singing was similar to most other tribal chanting.

Bob made the remark that the girl was old enough to be broken in by the old Chief. I said, "How?"

He said, when a girl thirteen or fourteen has her menses, the Chief takes her and goes through the family act. This is called 'breaking her in'. She is then eligible for marriage. A young man desiring marriage has to purchase the girl by giving the father a boat or rifle, both being necessary to the Seri's existence and protection. At the wedding they have sort of a fiesta and much mescal is drunk, which properly solemnizes a wedding.

When a girl has a baby it usually comes very naturally and easily, but I remember one girl's first baby was three days in coming, and she suffered a great deal. This was on a subsequent trip. She was staying with many of her people on the mainland and someone asked them if they didn't want a doctor or other help. They said: No, they had one. It was a Medicine Man who chanted over the girl and dug hollows in the sand to fit her heels into. He said that the legs had to be kept apart. This was all he did. But ordinarily there is no trouble, and if a baby is born at noon the mother is up and doing, and cooks supper for her lord and master. The men treat their wives with kindness and each shares with the other any delicacy.

In Seriland domestic duties are reversed from the usual Indian methods. The men get the water and the women get the wood. This consists mostly of driftwood gathered along the shore, and it is a picturesque sight to see a string of women and girls bringing in loads of wood in baskets on their heads at sunset.

There are no plural marriages, but sometimes when a Chief is old, or rather when his wife is old and can have no more babies, he can take a younger woman as his wife. The present Chief is getting old now, almost too old to break in the girls, so they may get a younger man. This might be called the perquisites of office. He takes the cream.

They hunt lice in the head and eat them. This is said to increase the amorous desires. The penis of the male turtle is cut out and dried. This is pounded and pulverized and placed in the food of the women. This is said to create a desire for a man and the family act.

157 The women are virtuous and faithful and perform all the duties of
152 wife and mother and bear their share of hardships. The hard life,
[145] exposure and struggle for existence soon causes hard features, wrinkles
[165] and ugliness. Many babies die young and the tribe probably numbers
[167] only about two hundred.

The dancing by the driftwood fires continued as we turned in to
123 rest, our eyes constantly drawn to the flame and the glittering eyes in the wild dark faces, while the waves of the sea accompanied the chanting in that mysterious isle of Seriland.

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Seris - off to the fishing grounds - December 1934. Alcatraz Island in distance.

222 In Seriland most of the food comes from the sea. During April and May, at the time of my first visit, a green grass growing on the sea bottom was detached and washed ashore. The women dragged it up on the bank near camp and spread it out to dry. Some of the stalks contained about seven fine green seeds the size of a pin head. When dry, the women threshed them out with sticks on a piece of canvas. These are
[285] cleaned by the deft use of the *batea*, or winnowing basket, of which these people are pastmasters.

252 A pint of these fine seeds were parched in an olla over coals of driftwood and constantly stirred to prevent burning. It was then ground
262 on a flat rock like a *metate*---any flat rock---into a green meal which was very nourishing. This was cooked in an olla with turtle oil, making a porridge like thick green paint. It was then drunk or eaten with the fingers. If there is plenty, two fingers are used; if not, only one finger.

10: Davis E-5 (1922-ca.1939) 1965 NU31 Seri NU31

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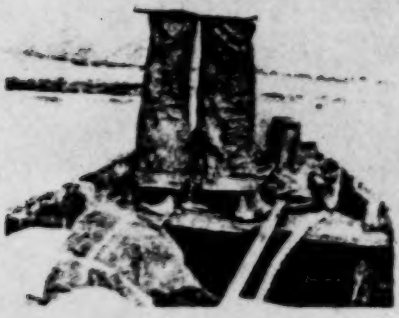
Poised for harpooning sea turtles off Tiburon Island - 1936



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The catch

262 The Seris also eat the fruit of the *cholla* cactus, *pitahalla* and sag-
222 *uaro*, and probably many other plants in season, but they are wild to get flour. But the principal diet is *cahuama*, or sea turtle.

225 After a day or so with the Seris, their food supply became exhaust-
123 ed and they made arrangements to take our boat (all they had was a
[177] *balsa*) and get a sea turtle. So at four o'clock in the morning, with Roberto and Nene, his brother, and myself, they shoved off for the fishing ground. It took two hours of hard rowing to reach the Sonora
[133] side, as the tide was racing up the *Infernillo*. Most of the waters are shallow, with patches of dark and light sandy bottom, with seaweed or grass. On this green grass the turtle feeds; it is their alfalfa field, and it takes a keen-practised eye to see a turtle at the bottom and harpoon him before he escapes.

225 Once on the hunting ground, water, one of the Seris stood in the
[111] bow with a harpoon twenty feet long, a detachable barb on the end of it, and a heavy line attached. The Seri in the bow motioned with his hand this way or that, slow or fast, and watched the bottom. At last he plunged his spear and withdrew the pole. The turtle swam awhile
[111] until exhausted, and then he was drawn alongside, his head pounded with an ironwood club, and then he was turned on his back and drawn on board. This called for great skill in balancing the cranky, smooth-bottomed boat to keep it from shipping a wave.

225 When a Seri goes in his native *balsa*, which only holds one man, he
50 straddles the middle part on his knees, resting them on seaweed. The craft is light and is a good sea craft, but it is low in the water and the man is wet all the time. He uses a double-bladed paddle, and his harpoon rests against pegs set in the *carrisos*. A rock which serves to quiet the turtle, two pointed stakes and a heavy fish line complete the equipment. He has to paddle across to the other side in that cramped position, say eight or ten miles, very early in the morning, then watch his chance to harpoon. If successful he brings up the turtle, knocks him on the head with the rock, pulls him on the end of the craft by skillful manipulation, cut slots in the front flippers, put stakes through and into the *carriso*, pinning him firmly in place, then paddle back.

225 The wind came up strong when we started to return from our turtle
123 hunt and with wind and tide against us we rowed across the Island. Bob and his brother disembarked and took it afoot for camp, a distance of ten miles, reaching there at two p.m. The Seris made a tump line and towed the boat, one towing and two warping off-shore until we arrived at camp about four p.m.

When the bow was run up on the shore everybody came down, the women and children talking a steady stream in their strange jargon.
123 They soon jerked the heavy turtle out, dragged him up the beach on
262 his back, and began immediately to cut him up. Bob spoke for the breast, which is a white plate on the underside of the turtle with

[text continues on p. 168]

123 the flesh attached. This we roasted, or broiled, by standing it on
262 edge against two stakes in front of the fire. The breast was white and tender, somewhat like roast pig, but much more delicious.

262 The Seris cut off the great flippers, dug out the entrails, and
252 whenever there was a crack in the crowd of men, women and children, there was a dog lapping the blood and chewing a shred of meat before being driven off. Men, women and children tore off pieces of the tender
[251] meat and ate it raw. The blood which gathered in the hollow of the shell was baled out and saved in an olla.

A woman took out the coils of entrails, ripped them open with her finger, squeezed out the half-digested sea grass, which resembled closely-packed boiled greens, and rinsed them in the sea. The head
[251] was skillfully disjointed, and with flippers, entrails and liver, put up on the brush roof away from the sand and dogs.

Then began the feast; half the turtle being devoured immediately.
[264] To see Blanco, which name fits neither his complexion or character, gnaw the bone and tear away the raw flesh of a turtle flipper with his strong white teeth and cruel mouth, would not require much imagination to substitute the shin bone of a human being.

All parts of the sea turtle are utilized except the bones and portions of the head. The white, flexible under-shell is roasted and eaten, but how they can masticate and digest it is a mystery. I tried it and gave it up, as did all our party. It might have been a Goodyear tire, for all the impression we made on it, but even the Seri children
237 eat it. The carapace is broken into small pieces and dried out in an olla, and this yields a green oil. The shell is nearly one-half inch thick and filled with minute cells which carry oil. This oil is evidently a provision of nature to prevent barnacles and marine growths from attaching to the shell. This oil is poured into a previously cleaned section of intestine, fastened at one end, and then is bottled, ready for transportation or use.

The skin of the flippers is used for sandals. The broken pieces of carapace are also used for firing ollas. The shells are used for windbreaks, for receptacles for transporting household things on women's heads, and possibly for other needs. The stomachs are stretched, probably with sand, and when dried are used for transporting water, the same as we use a canteen.

185 The Seris are always improvident. They raise no cattle. They plant
261 nothing and the only crops they raise are children and dogs. They
[291] store no food away, eat when there is plenty, go hungry when there is
[231] nothing to eat. When they will eat raw turtle meat like animals, their
[262] taste is not refined. This is evidenced when they will eat a horse or burro dead, several days---scrape off the maggots to get a chance at it.

262 Burro meat comes first in their estimation, then mares, then steers, but they take what they can get and no questions asked. Burro deer or black tail is a great article of diet, and these deer are on the Island. Wolves and coyotes are on the Island also. I do not think they eat them.

266 As I have said, the Seris are reputed to be cannibals, or to have been. Since those who furnished the meals cannot speak, it is a matter not entirely proven.

648 177 There is a war on between Mexican fishermen and the Seris. The Seris are wild for boats and will do almost anything to get one, so two years ago a chance occurred and they killed seven drunken Mexican fishermen and seized their boat. Last summer, some fishermen surprised the Seris, killed one, and recovered the boat. They mourn this boat a lot more than they do the dead man.

648 Twenty or thirty years ago, Governor Ysabel came here with some troops to capture some Yaquis who had joined the Seris. The Governor told the Chief he would have to give up the Yaquis, as they were outlaws. The next day the Seris brought in six right hands. They said they had killed the Yaquis. Asked how and why, they said they had killed them while they slept and they wanted their guns. They cut off the right hand of each as proof.

With all their apparent friendship, we never go without arms. When we sleep our rifles are alongside of us, and we wear our revolvers with us. Sometimes we roll in with our clothes on. But they have never, by sign or act, shown anything but friendship.

851 123 177 A baby boy about four months old was in camp, so Rafael Ysabel baptized him and gave his name Rafael, and presented him with a little gold cross of which his mother was very proud. She held the baby while he poured a little precious fresh water over its head and repeated:

"In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, I name thee Rafael. . ."

123 Curious black eyes follow us always. When we eat, the Seris often squat around us and watch every mouthful. If there is any bread, gravy, grease, beans or meat left over, we pass it on and they certainly clean up.

While we eat, the waves are always lapping on the shore upon which many pretty shells are thrown by the tide, besides water-worn pumice stone in all sizes down to a small marble.

Our meals are very simple. We bake biscuit in the dutch oven for every meal, cook turtle meat, if we have it, or beans or rice or spuds.

[text continues on p. 171]

10: Davis E-5 (1922-ca.1939) 1965 NU31 Seri NU31

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Nene Thomson, Poncho Oliveria and Roberto Thomson at Tecomate, on north coast, upending whale ribs cast up on the beach. Although thoroughly dried and bleached for years by a semitropic sun, it took their united efforts to elevate these ribs.---E.H.D.

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Roberto Thomson, Santo Blanco and Edward H. Davis

123 We have given the Seris so much we are now short ourselves. Variety is very restricted. We haven't enough tin dishes or tools to go around, but that does not trouble us at all. All the cleaning is done in salt water and sand. Fresh water is only used to drink. Nothing else. We can't even take a shave. Not a drop of water. We are very lax in our personal toilets and appearance. We are barefooted always in the boat, as we have to wade to get the boat in deep water, and often the waves slosh on board.

This boat is made of a hollowed log twenty feet long and three feet, three inches wide, and she is very cranky. She almost upset with us several times. When everybody is placed in it, it is difficult to even change a posture without endangering everybody. She has no keel and leaks some, so we have to bail out often. But she is a good sea boat and rides the waves well if they are not too rough.

123 One evening we decided to get a message through to Juan Tomas, the 439 Chief, some twenty or thirty miles distant. Herrera promised to go if [203] we gave him twenty thirty-thirty cartridges. He would go one day and [404] return the next, a round trip of about fifty miles. We gave him the message to tell those people we had a lot of things to trade for the things they use in every day life. Pelican skin kilts, bows and arrows, ollas, baby cradles, hair brushes and other interesting things. I had already made a trade with Blanco for his *balsa*, promising him sufficient lumber, nails and tools, to make a boat large enough to carry five men. This promise I fulfilled to the letter, and later on another expedition to Seriland I had the pleasure of sailing in this boat, which was well built and seaworthy. The unusual part of this bargain was that Blanco permitted me to deprive him of his only means (apparently) of making a living in hunting *cahuama* for himself and his family, freely and without hesitation, simply on my promise of lumber in the future. I was deeply touched by the trust reposed in me by this old sea rover.

322 These people are splendid mechanics with the crudest of tools--- [50] rocks, fire, bones, knives. For instance, the pole of the harpoon was composed of five pieces of driftwood and a seagoing boat which I saw in Guaymas, captured by Mexican fishermen after killing the Seri crew, was composed of fully one hundred pieces of driftwood fastened with nails made of wire, and tied with fiber, and all the seams were filled [325] with a black composition of native origin resembling pitch. Previous to the use of old iron, harpoon points were made of ironwood, but now iron is universally used.

283 I asked old Blanco for some of his native rope. He gave me some of [123] it. He said they get the slender roots of the mesquite and peel the bark, and then the girls and women chew the fibrous wood. This is shredded and twisted into small two-stranded ropes. It is this rope, tied around and around, that holds the *carriso balsa* together.

285 [324] I watched a woman make a basket. She used young branches from the terote tree, I think *terote blanco*. The bark was peeled and shredded into two parts, the heart taken out and kept separate. The coils of the round part were put in a pot of hot water to soften, and the edge of the basket was soaked a little in hot water. The center of the coils or woof consisted of six or eight strips of heart while the outer sap wood was woven around in regular coil-weave fashion.

[287] [312] A brad of deer shin-bone sharpened on pumice to a needle point was used as a brad. With this brad she split the fiber, held one piece in her mouth, and stripped the back down. Then she punched a hole in the bone brad, inserted the sharp end of the fiber and pulled it almost through. She then repeated the operation, adding a strip of heart once in a while. These baskets are coarse and unattractive, but they are hard and tough and stand heavy use.

323 [237] [372] Cooking vessels consist of two or three cooking ollas that nest together to facilitate transportation. These are made of coarse clay, solely for utility without regard for beauty of shape, color or design. In burning these ollas they use the shell of the sea turtle. The cells of the shell are filled with a fine oil and this burns the ollas. On most of the other places on the mainland, the Indians use cow chips, or dried droppings to fire the clay.

263 184 123 [277] We proposed to shift camp to Tinajanita, our first landing place, where Herrera was to meet us in two days with the Chief and some of his men. Since it was blowing, he said the men couldn't fish and they would be on land probably hunting, so he would be able to see them. At this time they gathered *sescal* on an island off the west coast to make the liquor they used at fiestas, weddings and other celebrations.

Herrera left at five o'clock in the morning, with a swinging gait, for the opposite side of the Island. The distance around by boat would be fifty miles, and across, only about twenty or twenty-five---a full day's trip and hard, as mountains would have to be crossed and the rocks were sharp and the way difficult.

123 We had breakfast on rice and bread. Our rations are running low and we expect to move this morning. We made arrangements about the native boat and saw Blanco trot off with two five-gallon cans for water, a distance of ten miles. We went to the camp to get a few things---an old basket, a Pelican hide and other things, and then we asked the help of everybody to get the boat down to water---the tide was very low. The one man, the women and five of us were required to drag and push the boat to water.

We waved goodbye, loaded her up and then rowed against the tide and wind for miles, and finally landed in a lovely sheltered lagoon, built our fire and had lunch. A few crabs were speared, and late in the afternoon the wind shifted. We loaded the boat again and pushed off for Tinajanita, our first landing place. After rowing, we raised

[text continues on p.174]

10: Davis E-5 (1922-ca.1939) 1965 NU31 Seri NU31

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Edward H. Davis with a rattlesnake around his neck - 1922

123 the sail, a very delicate operation in so cranky a boat, and between rowing and sailing, we reached our destination about eight o'clock, all worn out. Before landing, we called and halloed to notify possible strange Seris that we were friends. After a bite we turned in.

In the morning we started for the *carrisal*, as the water hole was called because *carriso* grows there, as we were almost out of water. The nearest *carrisal* was five miles away. We each had a rifle, revolver and extra cartridges, besides two five-gallon cans and a canteen with some water in it. Nene, Bob's brother, had been there and knew the trail, so we all followed him. The most traveled trail from any camp always led to water.

After going a couple of miles we entered the mountains, and from there on the trail was stony and later rocky as we entered the canyon.
[13] On the way Rafael caught a light gray diamond-back rattler. He held the head with a stick, reached down and grasped it tightly just in back of the mouth. It rattled viciously and twisted itself about his arm, but to no purpose. I took his photo with it coiled about his neck, and the rattle buzzing on his breast. Later he took my photo, I holding the rattler while his tail was coiled around my neck. Later, we killed it and drew the skin off like a kid glove. When we reached camp I filled the skin with sand to cure it, so I could take it home.

[13] There seemed to be several zones of vegetation as we advanced. First came brush, then *pitahalla*, ironwood and various cacti, then *torote*. In the mountains, *mesquite, palo blanco, "wild fig"* and several varieties of brush. The roots of a certain variety of brush furnished us with tea, as our coffee had disappeared. This washed and boiled, made a very good drink.

At the latter end of our arduous trip we had to climb over boulders, and then we arrived at a few pools of water in the rocks and a bunch of *carrisos* in their midst. Beneath the *carrisos* the creek bed was as dry as a bone. We climbed up higher, looking for tanks in the rocky bed. We found one tank but it was filled with green algea. In some places there were great caves in the cliffs and everywhere the scenery was rugged and fascinating. The main mountain above us seemed to rise five hundred feet, with very sparse vegetation. We climbed up some very steep places, almost perpendicular, but as we found no more water we returned and filled our cans.

I had brought shaving tools with me, except soap. However, one of the men knew of a certain root that would produce a lather. This was handy and I mascerated the root. Bob put it in my bandanna and by manipulation produced a good suds. With this I reduced a week's growth of whiskers.

On the way we passed several places where burro deer horns had been stuck in the trees and well bleached out.

Bob and the one-eyed Mexican, Oliverria, carried the water, two

five-gallon cans full. They were fastened one each end of a *palanca*, or shoulder pole, and thus brought to camp. If anyone thinks this is easy they should try it over rocky, uneven, sandy, stony ground, dodging thorny vegetation at every step. 123

The colors of the mountains were mostly red of volcanic character, with great streaks of yellow and pink, deeply cut with side canyons and sharp ridges, all similar to other desert ranges. [133]

The men caught a few crabs and gathered clams in the afternoon, which helped out our larder. One of them told about his wife being shot. He said they had a big fiesta and during the drunk, a Seri shot at his head. He happened to be stooping alongside his wife and the bullet buried itself in his wife's thigh. We could feel it through her clothes.

A good many years ago when stages ran between Nogales and Guaymas, the Seris held up the stage, killed the men and captured one Mexican girl. She was brought here and made the wife of one of the chiefs, Coyote Iguana, and she bore children. Some years later her brothers came here to induce her to return, but she refused, saying that she was ashamed to go back and she had children here. About fifteen years ago in a battle with the Papagos, two of her sons were killed. 648 727 563

The Papagos have taken toll of many Seris, these hunted Indians who are such fascinating and ingenious companions, whether they are harpooning turtle or packing water through the thorny wastes. 648

372 516 291

Seris making fire (with fire drill) on Island of Tiburon

10: Davis E-5 (1922-ca. 1939) 1965 NU31 Seri NU31

142
291
302

Seri faces

10: Davis E-5 (1922-ca. 1939) 1965 NU31 Seri NU31

142
291
302

Seri young man

Seri Indian

123 [202] It was a beautiful morning in early May, and the water was still as a pond, reflecting all the sunrise tints like a mirror. After a breakfast of clams and broth, bread and sand and bronco tea, we made a big smoke and were answered by a similar smoke two miles off, so we knew our friends were on the way.

123 492 [415] In one hour they began trailing in, the women each with a load on her head, walking graceful and erect. On one head was an inverted turtle shell containing nearly all the family belongings done up in rags. On the top was the most precious belonging of all---the rifle. The man carried two or three ollas and other things on a shoulder stick. Everything necessary for their home was carried on their heads.

123 Soon the Indian Blanco was seen paddling in his *balsa;* he also had a load and had paddled all the way from Ironwood camp against wind and sometimes tide. As they were all very thirsty we gave them water around. They immediately went to the shore as it was low tide, and began gathering small oysters from the rocks. Soon each woman returned with a half bushel of them on her head.

About three o'clock and for an hour or so thereafter, Antonio Herrera, the Chief's son Chico, the old Chief Juan Tomas, two other men and one woman, came drifting into camp with their dogs. Each one was loaded with things. They were a pretty wild looking bunch. There was very little food and little water for so many.

648 731 The Chief said that a day or two before, some of his men had a fight with some sailors (Mexicans) on the Island of San Estevan four or five miles off the south west corner of Tiburon. Nobody was killed, but the two boats, the wealth of the Island, had drifted away and were lost, leaving eight men marooned on the Island. They had gone there to gather *sescal* to make drink to celebrate a wedding to come off soon. Three men were five days without water. They sent up frantic smoke signals every day. At last they were seen, and help went for them in the only remaining boat on the Island. They were rescued.

648 484 123 The Chief and his men and women, with us, are going to Hermosillo ninety miles afoot with all their belongings to ask the Government for food and help.

142 [622] The Chief looks to be seventy years old, a grim dark-skinned individual with a thin fringe of hair on his upper lip, broad nose, wide nostrils, small black eyes. He is well-built and erect. None of these that I have seen so far have any fat. They are lean and sinewy. [302] The young men are of large build, high cheek bones, some with hair on [291] their lips, their long black hair braided; sometimes with a strand of red worsted. All were either barefooted or wore sandals. I saw one pair of sandals made out of turtle hide; another of burro hide.

648 123 When the Chief arrived, the sail of a vessel was seen over the beach. Bob recognized it as belonging to a launch of a Yaqui Indian

[text continues on p 180]

10: Davis E-5 (1922-ca. 1939) 1965 NU31 Seri NU31

641
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576

Fastening feathers on arrows with sinew held tight in his teeth.
1929

[283]

648 friend of his from Guaymas, although only the upper part of the sail
123 was visible. This greatly frightened the women who began packing to escape to the interior. They thought they were friends of ours and it was a plan to have them land. Bob proposed to go out and meet them, and if possible get provisions. With the Chief and two other Seris, Bob and his brother, leaving the firearms behind, hoisted the sail and headed for the mouth of the bay.

When they reached the Infernillo the sloop veered away, its crew being afraid of being killed by the Seri. There were six men and boys and they mustered all the rifles and stood ready to fight. They had just had trouble three days before at San Estevan. At last the wind veered and they had to stop and Bob waved his cap. Finally they got close enough to talk, and then came on board and secured some provisions---a little coffee, sugar, fresh onions, tomatoes and rice, and a little flour for the Chief. They had a fair wind back and returned about dusk.

123 At night everybody was happy. I had gathered two pails of oysters that are exposed on the rocks at low tide and I had built a fire over them so they would open readily, and then had cut them out. We made a sort of stew then, enough to go around the crowd.

123 After supper the Indians gave a dance, a very weird affair. I
534 have seen nearly all the musical instruments used by the Indians of
[535] the Southwest and Mexico in their ceremonial dances, but the Seris were the first tribe I had ever seen use the bow and arrow as a musical instrument. A six-foot bow with a tightly stretched bowstring of twisted sinew was held, back down, on two inverted bowl baskets by
[533] one of three men, all of whom struck the string with arrows. This emitted a musical baritone note like the vibration of a piano wire, in perfect rhythm to the weird chanting of the three musicians, singing a wild plaintive air.

535 The dancer, Manuel Encina, a grim old boy, facing the orchestra,
123 mounted the back of a turtle shell resting over a hollow in the sand, as a resonator, with a long staff held in his right hand to steady him, and gave one of the prettiest exhibitions of the double shuffle on the rounded top of an oily old turtle shell that I have ever seen. At the end of each *canto* there was a rest, and then they went at it again. This lasted two hours, and was lighted by a feeble camp fire and moon and was danced on the shore.

123 Before daybreak the following morning we arose, loaded the boat, and then the Indians brought a lot of things, besides three or four rifles. Then two young Indians jumped in. We were so crowded that we could not move. The two Indians and two of our men used paddles as we were too crowded to row. There were seven men besides all the junk, and the boat was so loaded and so cranky there was imminent danger of capsizing. At the least movement she would dip to the edge of her

[123] gunwales, and then in trying to balance, she would dip the other way.

As we got to the point, the swells were larger and the danger so imminent we stopped the boat in lee of the point nearest Sonora, and Bob and I landed.

Old Blanco had paddled his *balsa* with some of the freight to the Sonora side. The boat put off again, and rode the sea better and it landed all right on Sonora side. In the meantime, several of the women and children, with their loads, had reached the Seri point ready to be ferried across. The boat returned with two Seris paddling. We loaded a lot of Indian junk, Bob and I and several children, the Chief and a woman. Nine in all. We reached the Sonora side, all right.

By this time breakfast had been cooked and we sat down to drink black coffee and eat rice and onions. The wild-looking Seris sat around us watching each mouthful, hungrily. When we finished we gave them all that was left and they cleaned it up.

[231] As we left the Seri point, and as their masters left, the dogs trotted to the water's edge and howled. Bob said that when all had crossed, the dogs would plunge in and swim across the swift current.
[134] The water was infested with sharks, so it was possible that some of them would not reach shore. At last everybody got across, dogs and all.

[402] The Indians carried their packs; the men with the shoulder sticks and the women balancing their loads with marvelous dexterity on their heads. Two men packed twenty gallons of water in five-gallon cans.

When we had all our things in the boat, Juan Tomas jumped in with his pack. We were well loaded before, but this made us a little too deeply laden. Nevertheless, we pushed off and raised the sail to take advantage of the wind. We sailed parallel to the shore for a few miles until the waves got too overpowering and the boat had a lot of water in her. The mast was unstepped---a very delicate operation---and we made for the shore after shipping some of the waves.

My heart was in my mouth most of the time as each time the boat rolled, one side almost dipped up a wave. It was a matter of personal safety as well as safety of what few things I had already collected. One olla I had bought was smashed. The waves looked like clear green paint.

We finally landed without mishap and pulled the boat up, but it was so rocky we had great difficulty in walking in our bare feet. Our legs and feet were bare when we were in the boat and mine were badly scalded by the sun.

The Seris had made camp one quarter of a mile down the beach from us, and the old Chief shouldered his pack and strode down to them. We were very thankful.

[225] Soon some of the men came back to borrow the boat to hunt for

123 225 *cahuamas*, or sea turtle. After two or three hours' use of the boat they had harpooned two and brought them to shore. Then the whole bunch went to the shore and dragged them out and began cutting them up as they were all hungry and had had nothing to eat hardly. They gave us one breast, the most delicate part of the turtle. It is tender juicy white meat.

123 We soon had the boat loaded again, paddled to the Indian camp, and took the *carriso* boat in tow. We raised the sail and a good wind sprung up and we made a fast run before the breeze. This also whipped up a nasty sea, and the great green rollers would come and slop against the freeboard to an inch of coming on board. At a critical time our slight tow-line parted and we stood a good chance of being swamped in order to hold the *balsa* until we could bend a heavy fish line with great fishhooks which we jabbed into it.

The boat, all the time, was ripping through the water, the boom was slopping in the waves, and each green roller threatened to come on board. We dared not spit overboard for fear of dipping up a wave. The wind and waves got so nasty we decided to make a landing. To add to our anxiety, the *balsa* had broken loose again, but we held it with our hands despite the waves. We unstepped the mast after dropping the sail, and just in time, as the seas got bigger and the wind stronger. We were so cramped we could not row, so the paddles were used, and eventually we reached a sandy beach, all safe and sound, and pulled the boats up out of the water.

I had sent a note ahead, in English and Spanish, to the car to meet us at a designated place on the coast to the south about fifteen or twenty miles. He had stopped to eat *cahuamas* to give him strength. He was a big raw-boned man, Chico Romero, son of the Chief.

123 133 On the two points nearest Tiburon and Sonora, the most beautiful rocks had been washed up by the sea, that I ever saw. All colors of the rainbow were represented, but lavender and violet prevailed. The sands were a delicate lavender while the shore at Tinajanita, up the bay, was a deep lavender. Many beautiful shells were left by the tide as well as various colored pumice.

Our present camp was at the foot of the granite hills, and the sand was almost white. It was made much whiter by tiny shell fragments only as large as grains of sand.

680 Ten or twelve years ago Bob's uncle and cousin were captured by the Yaquis. They suffered the most inhuman tortures. The soles of their feet were sliced off and they were made to walk over sharp rocks. Their eyes were gouged out and they were scalped.

Another captive was used like a piece of beef. He was staked out and one Yaqui would ask the other:

"What cut would you like?"

"I'll take a piece of leg," the other would answer.

A chunk of living flesh would be cut out and piece by piece the captive was hacked to pieces.

Only two or three years ago Bob and two friends had trouble. Bob escaped by a very narrow margin, but they tracked him like hounds for twelve miles. His friends were captured and stripped of clothes and everything, and expected every moment to be shot. They caught a hog, hung it up alive and cut a long strip off the back and left it hanging. They got frightened away suddenly and left the two friends unharmed. His uncle was captured on his way to Royon, on the San Miguel River twenty miles south of Opodepe.

648 The Yaquis and the Seri Indians have been enemies for untold years. What grim scenes the eyes of the desert have witnessed in the past!

133

Entering cave - Tiburon - 1936

123 One night when the sea was quiet Bob and his brother went sea turtle hunting but didn't catch any. We made a bright fire of drift to guide them back. The sea murmured gently, accompanying the crackle of the fire.

We turned in on-shore in the clean white sand. We roasted the turtle breast that the Seris gave us, by standing it on edge in front of the fire. It was tender and elegant. For bread we made pancakes, mixed with sea water. We were out of baking powder. The green coffee secured from the Yaqui fishermen was wasted in a frying pan until it

123 was black. He then ground it in the frying pan by rolling it with a tin can. When made, the coffee was black and bitter, but they were used to it that way.

At three thirty in the morning we were up from our sand beds and drank coffee. At four we pushed off, towing our *balsa* on which we lashed our turtle shells, antlers and other things. Our boat rode the waves like a duck.

As we glided by the foot of some mountains we could hear the surf break sullenly. We had the sail up but soon had to resort to the oars as the slight wind died out. Day soon began to grow light. The sea was glassy, reflecting the rosy morning tinge. There was a swell on but the waves were smooth.

136 The cormorants, in threes and fives, began flying to their feeding grounds with swift wings and necks outstretched. Then a few Pelicans drifted idly by on lazy wings. A school of sardines fretted the water near us, chased by a hungry fish from its depths. A few porpoises rose and dived, rose and dived, rose and dived, time after time. At one time eight of them came within twenty feet of us and one dived right under our bow, bouncing the boat up and down.

139 123 Soon we were passing some red volcanic hills, with caves and blow holes in the cliff and sea caves below, in which the sea roared. Giant cactus secured a precarious footing in the crannies of the cliffs. Then a long beach, then *Cerro Prieto*, another red cliff descending to the sea, penetrated with numerous caves and roosting places for cormorants.

123 As we neared Alcatraz *(Pelican)* Island, we saw a fishing boat in the distance. The wind had freshened and was ahead and the waves seemed almost to come in board, but the hollowed tree arose and rarely shipped any water. A boat put off from the fishing boat and was rowed to shore, and as we came up we hailed the crew and grounded our own boat. They had seen us from Alcatraz Hill, and seeing the balsa thought the Seri Indians had stolen a fishing boat and were towing their own boat. Each man had a belt of cartridges and if the Seris had been there instead of us they were going to kill them. Bob knew them from Guaymas.

We pushed off from shore again, and after rowing a half or three quarters of a mile further we beached our boats, cooked dinner and waited for our auto truck. Our provisions were almost gone. We had only enough for one meal left. No meat at all. Water was almost gone. None other for miles.

415 264 262 One of the cherished vessels used by the Seris is an agate chamber pot. It is black from much use. When I saw it, it contained a green slimy mess made from meal of seaweed seeds and the green fat or oil of the turtle. The Seris stick their fingers into the pot and then lick them off. If any is left the dog licks out the pot. No vessel is ever washed; it is licked clean.

ooo ever washed; it is licked clean.

415 One time a bunch of Seris camped near a ranch and spied a white
197 porcelain chamber pot sunning itself. They immediately secured it and began cooking in it, without washing it first. The rancher saw them and told them that it was dirty and told them not to cook in it. They said they would clean it up after they got through and leave it as it was before they finished with it. When they come to Hermosillo they get pots from heaps of city refuse and carry them back as prizes to the Island.

123 We made smokes to attract attention, but all to no purpose, until
501 about three o'clock the car appeared. It could not come close to the beach as the sand was too soft, so we had to pack everything two hundred yards in soft sand. The *balsa* was very heavy and some distance away. It also had some things tied on it, so Bob pulled off his pants and we pushed it into the surf. Bob first stood up, but it rocked so he got on his knees and pushed out with a pole and got it headed to the rollers, after which it rode easier. He then lost his pole, and in struggling to recover it the *balsa* rolled over with him and dumped him in the surf, but he grabbed the side and rolled it right again. He could then touch bottom, so he came in through the surf with it and we dragged it up and unloaded three turtle shells and a few other things. There were four of us and we put oars under it and gradually lifted and carried it to the truck.

It must have weighed six hundred or seven hundred pounds, a good part of which was water. I must say I was glad to see it started on its long land-journey.

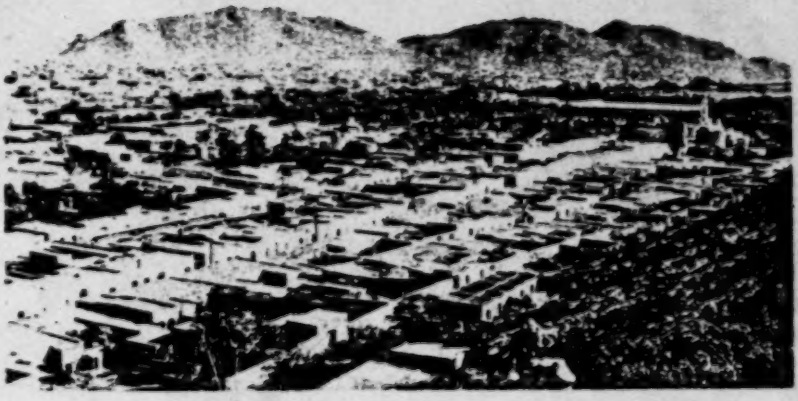
123 The Indian messenger had arrived with my note which brought the truck. Bob, Luis and the Mexican took the boat and tried to go into the place where they hid it, but it was low tide and the boat could not enter, so they beached it and walked to Agua Sarco where we had preceded them by two or three hours. We had, over the last of our grub, a little rice and beans. As many doves were flying about the water, I shot fifteen or twenty. One of my shots brought down seven doves.

439 Before night all the Seris were camped near us, and when Bob came,
123 Louis had brought all our trade stuff, so I began bartering right away.

As all were hungry we gave each man and woman three cups of flour, and three pieces of *panoche*, cakes of coarse brown sugar. They were wild for this, so when they had finished they were well disposed.

On the Island I had been called a cheerful liar for promising things, but now it was different. Three new butcher knives, all bright and shiny, I traded for three rusty homemade affairs. Two were made of barrel hoops and one from the piece of a shovel. This was a way-up knife. For the violin I traded a harmonica, and for three carved

(text continues on p. 187)



View of Hermosillo, Capitol of the State of Sonora, Mexico, from Ceppo Compano. A city of about 18,000 inhabitants.

439 123 little gods I traded some muslin, a harmonica and some *panoche*. For native hair brushes, I traded three fine-tooth combs for catching *piojos*, or lice, easier. I gave each woman a little round mirror and they were greatly pleased.

To the old Chief I presented a good pocket knife and a mirror. For the bow I traded a spark lighter. By striking the edge of a small wheel with milled edge it strikes a spark from a small flint and lights a wick.

123 535 [534] [252] [415] We asked for a dance, and the Seris, using the bow and striking sticks for music, the slender girl jumped up and down on a flat piece of tin which served, instead, of a turtle shell and also served for baking flour cakes upon also. A while before, Louis had seen a woman wash her head and that of a child in the chamber pot, empty the water and then cook in it.

After the girl had danced a while on the tin, old Manual Encina pushed her away and hopped on himself and did the double-shuffle for half an hour, after which we left for our camp.

197 194 The language of the Seris is the most difficult and peculiar I have ever heard. It is spoken deep in the throat with the mouth open and sounds like no other language I have ever heard except that there are some sounds like Papago.

439 123 Even before breakfast of the next day we were still trading with the Indians, and in an hour or so I possessed nearly everything they had except their rags. They seemed happy and contented and postponed their trip to Hermosillo. I left some stuff with Louis Thomson to be traded later for bows and arrows, Pelican skin dresses and baby cradles.

We then arranged our loads, said *Adios* to the Seris, and left for Hermosillo, where we arrived without accident about six-thirty p.m. The sun was very hot and the road heavy and the sun glaring, and we were all very tired when we reached town. I stored my stuff with Mr. Marks at Hotel Cohen, and will crate it before leaving for Yaqui River.

123 202 Before leaving the Seri Chief I told him that whenever he saw this sign---Circle Bar D and left hand below it, it was me---their friend, and not to shoot at me. He said he would tell all the Seris, and I left him my card with the same sign on it. When will I see him again!

Senor don Rafal Felix, Hermosillo - making hair rope

123 In February, nineteen-twenty-four, my son Stanley and I were on our way to Tiburon Island. At Nogales we went to see Mr. Holler, Custom House Broker. We asked about the entrance of firearms and revolvers, and he said a permit could only be secured through Secretary Hughes at Washington and President Obregon at Mexico City. However, I had read assurances from a high official that the first could be arranged. I would have to take chances with the second.

When I stated where I was going he said he would not care to go to Tiburon Island, among the savage cannibals, but that he would certainly carry a gun somehow, and his square jaw snapped while his eyes flashed. He had been a United States marshal in New Mexico, where there were a lot of bad *hombres*.

That settled the matter. The next morning we arose early, returned to the Montezuma Hotel where we had been staying, and I fastened my gun and cartridge belt about me in such a way that it did not show and its location would not be suspected. Where? That's a secret. Stan did likewise, in another part of his anatomy, and his could not be detected either. Not a bunch or a lump.

We passed inspection at U. S. Custom House and no questions asked, and then crossed the line to the Mexican Custom House. Here we opened our grips and unrolled our blankets and they were punched and jabbed and passed, rolled up and checked. Then we boarded our train which pulled out after a long delay for Hermosillo and Guaymas.

For a distance of one hundred and seventy-five miles, there were clusters of adobe and stick mud houses around each station, thronged with Mexican women and children standing in their doorways gazing at the train, which was always a source of wonder and speculation. Some of the places such as Santa Ana, Magdalena, and Carbo, are quite large adobe towns with streets and straggling houses, but the people and towns looked poverty-stricken enough.

The women and girls wore faded blue *rebozos*, or scarves, draped gracefully over head and shoulders, and many of their faces and forms were remarkably beautiful.

A crowd of people gathered about the cars at Santa Ana, and I noted a saddled horse standing facing the cars, riderless, reins over the horn, but standing as if tied. He never altered his position, he was so well trained.

Dr. Kessler who attended me at the hospital last year in Hermosillo was on the train, and directly behind us was a Mexican officer, large and dignified, trimmed in brass and silver braid, with an automatic swinging from his belt and shoulder, and several clip pockets.

Whenever I bent over, my cartridge belt was outlined across my shoulders and was plainly visible, if he looked. I expected to be tapped on the shoulder any moment and told to turn over my firearms,

123 but nothing happened.

123 We reached Hermosillo at three in the afternoon, and as we landed
622 Roberto and Sara met us, and Roberto embraced me. Then the Seri
[116] Indian Chief rushed up and fairly hugged me in his joy at seeing me again. A timid wild-looking Seri boy, of fifteen years of age, shyly shook hands with the *Americano*, while all the Mexican men and women, fully one hundred in number, looked on open-mouthed and wide-eyed, to see the Chief of the wildest and lowest of savage Indians in North America, rush up and embrace a white man.

We all climbed into Roberto's auto-truck, and my things were brought to Hotel Cohen, and then we all went to Roberto's home and stayed all the afternoon. He had just returned from the coast the day before, and Juan Tomas was determined to come also and greet me, and the boy---a nephew---hung on to the Chief, and finally Roberto said he would have to return on foot if he brought him. Juan Tomas said that made no difference. He would walk to the coast eighty or ninety miles, if only he could come.

[291] He was probably seventy-five years old. He wore a hat, but his
[302] hair was straggly and he had a slight moustache. He wore shirt and trousers and a dirty kilt---remanent of the Pelican-skin-kilt---around his waist, and he was barefooted. The boy had a not unpleasant face, long wild hair, shirt, pants, and a cotton kilt reached to his knees. He, too, was barefooted.

I gave the Chief a knife, and the boy a red crayon and fifty cents. With the crayon he made a V on his kilt. He was very shy and always kept in a shadow, or in the background, and he spoke no Spanish although he knew the Spanish alphabet.

Sara showed some photographs and postcards in a baloptican in a dark room, and among them were pictures of some Seris and myself. These created much excitement with the Chief and the boy, and they jabbered together in the Seri language with animation. They recognized some of the subjects, their own people.

584 Juan Tomas is to be married soon to an elderly Seri dame, and we
622 have been invited to attend the fiesta. He has been laying in the
648 trousseau for the bride, and several gallons of mescal. A steer or
123 burro will have to be provided, and all the fixin's and nothing will be left undone to make a very festive occasion. When asked to show us his gifts he reluctantly brought forth a package which he carefully unwrapped and disclosed eighteen yards of *manta*, two red pieces and one pink piece of Calico, some red handkerchiefs, and one box for painting the face. He carefully wrapped these up again and put them in the room set apart for him and the boy.

[608] The woman he is to marry has no male relatives from whom she can
[583] be bought, so the Chief appointed a man and created him Uncle *pro-tempore*, and to him the Chief is going to give a rifle and a blanket as the purchase price. Pretty high!

464 Last year the Seris and their families worked on the ranches
431 gathering corn and beans and made three thousand *pesos*, and then they
484 came to town to spend it. They go back and forth much more than they used to.

123 We ate supper with Mrs. Thomson and then we went to the Plaza to watch the carnival. Much confetti and *cascaroni* was thrown on boys and girls, and the square was thronged by a mass of weaving people, while the military band played seductive Mexican pieces.

The next morning after breakfast we started shopping and kept at it all day, purchasing things to trade with the Indians and groceries for them and ourselves.

While at one of the stores six or eight Yaqui Indians, from their town about one hundred and thirty miles distant, came to buy things for the Easter period. This is the one big fiesta of the year for them. The women were bare-footed and the men wore rawhide sandals. One Yaqui soldier came with them, and he wore three belts of ammunition. They were very dark, with short hair. Rather gaunt, fierce, striking faces.

We walked into a cigarette factory and saw them manufacture cigarettes by machinery. Four machines were running, turning out one hundred and sixty each per minute. Altogether, twenty-three thousand packets of fourteen each every eight hours. These packets are usually tied together in the shape of a solid wheel, one hundred packets each called a *ruedo*, or wheel.

After dinner we went to Roberto's house and they told us there that the Indian boy Pascual had gone out alone and was lost. The Captain left to hunt for him and later brought him in, and then he went out to hunt for us. We finally saw him on a side street and sent him home to his dinner.

Last night, Roberto said they slept up till midnight, then waked up, opened the bride's bundle, and gloated over the bright colors. Later on they opened it twice again. Then they sang and talked for a while before going to sleep again.

On the following day it was nearly three in the afternoon before we got the car repaired and all supplies on board, including our blankets and grips and lumber for a Seri *balsa*, or boat. This was a heavy load for the Ford truck besides five men, which included the two Indians. Every item had to be considered---food for ourselves and the Indians, all the trade things, lumber for a boat and tools to make it, gas, oil, cans for water and many other things.

We soon left the city behind and rattled through the outskirts of poor adobe or stick mud houses, many half in ruins but still sheltering some family.

After about fifteen or twenty miles we arrived at one of Rafael Ysabel's ranches, *Europa*, where Senor Feliz is the foreman or *Mayor*

123 *Dono.* It has fallen into sad decay---many buildings in ruins, ditches gone, mill and machinery idle; no water, very few people and a general appearance of slow, peaceful and painless disintegration.

The one redeeming feature is the daughters of the *senor.* Two of them were remaining at home, and in all Sonora I do not believe there are two more charming, modest, industrious as well as lovely maidens than are Laura and Clara Feliz. In addition, they are perfectly artless and very unassuming and retiring. I had with me some slight gifts for Laura and her father whom I had met before, but nothing for Clara, a tall handsome girl of sixteen. Laura thanked me with grace and charm.

After a visit of half an hour we continued on our journey, and after we had travelled about twenty miles more, passing the end mountain of *Siete Cerros,* or Seven Mountains, we reached San Carlos Rancho, another of Ysabel's ranches, containing four and a half square leagues or about forty square miles.

Another very sweet daughter of Feliz's---Lupe, or Guadalupe, lived here. She teaches school with twenty-six Mexican children and a night school for older boys. The school building is a low one-story structure of *carriso* reeds and earth roof. Both wind and sun can come through the cracks. The tables are built of rough boards and the benches had no backs. Everything was as neat and clean as conditions would permit.

At a little Mexican house, whose owner was a friend of Roberto, the wife cooked our meat and coffee and dished up the ever-ready beans. We ate outside the house by the light of a camp fire while a crowd of men and children stood gaping at us and drinking in the news that Roberto brought from the great metropolis. The conversation was a rapid-fire Mexican and sounded like machine guns going off, and this kept up long after Stan and I retired. We slept under a shed. Roberto insisted that I sleep on a bed, instead, with rawhide springs.

The Indians curled up around the camp fire, blankets on top, earth below.

In the morning we ate breakfast in the living room of the stick-mud house, which was poor---so poor, but hospitable. Tortillas of flour and corn, beans and meat were our fare.

We bought a sack of beans and one of corn, twenty pounds each, and then we took a photograph of the school. There were a few extra little girls whose fond mothers had decked out for the occasion. The children had swept the grounds clean and pulled outside the tenderly nursed vines in a jar inside the window, so that they also could be taken.

[31] [32] The dry parched desert is unkind to domestic plants and flowers and these are always blooming in jars or ollas or tin cans under ramadas or in other shade. They secure their share of precious water

[text continues on p. 194]

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Giant Zarbueso cactus and Roberto -
Tiburon Island - March 20, 1926

123 the same as do children and dogs, even though it may be hauled for
[132] six or eight miles on mule-back.
[137]

With gifts and hand-shaking all around, we bade goodbye to Lupe and the children and started on our way.

After leaving San Carlos we travelled through a cholla and giant cactus country until we reached Roberto's ranch at Santa Cruz. We had picked up Pancho Oliverria at San Carlos.

Just before leaving the ranch several men lifted a poor woe-begone mare to her feet. She was so poor and weak she could not get up by herself, but once up she managed to stand and finally staggered out into the *mesquital*, the place of mesquite. One eye was missing and watery matter was oozing out and running down her cheek. A night or two before, a lion caught and destroyed her colt, and probably in an effort to protect it the mare came too near the scene and the lion tore out her eye with one sweep of its paw.

Midway to Santa Cruz we stopped a moment at Blevens ranch *Costa Rica*. Blevens is a large, florid white-haired American who has lived in this country for fifteen or twenty years and hasn't much use for the Seris as they have killed so much of his stock.

[261] At one time he noticed a dead cow which was all swelled up and badly spoiled. No white man could stand the smell. He told some Seris about it, and they flocked around it, and when they had finished all that was left were the hoofs and horns.

Nene's wife cooked dinner for us at their house which was composed of *carrizos* and mud roofed with earth, all supported by mesquite logs. Surrounding it was a hog tight mesquite fence, and in this corral was a fifty-foot deep well which furnished the water supply. Half a bull's hide laced on to an iron hoop and holding about fifteen or twenty gallons, was the water bucket. This was hauled up by a long rawhide rope passing through an over-head block drawn by a mule.

After leaving Santa Cruz with none added to our crew, we wended our way through a maze of mesquite, cottonwood and other timber, gradually working out of the timber to more open country where traveling was not so strenuous. The steering gear was worn so that the old truck would often head for a saguaro or mesquite and stop just short of being smashed.

At last we reached a region of flat baked lake-beds, covered in flood times. Sometimes we could travel fast at fifteen miles and then again we would go in the low where it was soft. About three miles from our destination we took off half our load and piled it to one side and jogged along through a wild desert country with no roads or trails, through chollas, desert brush and torote trees.

123 When we neared a hill of dark volcanic rock a number of Seri In-
312 diens darted out, and with their help we reached a camp near the coast
361 where Roberto had recently located a small well of sweet water.

123 Clustered near this well were brush windbreaks joined together, divided
[361] by brush partitions all open on one side. Here were gathered several
[371] Seri families. There was no such thing as privacy or seclusion.
[372]

As soon as we stopped and unloaded we were immediately surrounded by a curious, half-starved mob of forty men, women and children, about fifteen to twenty children. All dirty, all ragged, all hungry. Some of them I recognized: others were new to me.

While preparing and eating our supper this motley crowd formed a circle about us and hungrily watched every mouthful. We gave them a little food and an orange all around, and they finally left. By that time we had also finished our bread and coffee and followed to the brush shelters.

535 A dance was immediately started. A place was hollowed in the sand,
123 a few short planks placed over it, and the dance was on. Music was
[518] furnished by men tapping on an inverted basket and chanting. Only one man danced at a time. Sand was thrown over the planks and the Indian danced a shuffle, scraping his bare feet on the boards. He held a staff in his right hand and danced to a song called in Spanish *El*
[171] *Toro*. Later on other dancers performed, then gave us the *venado* (deer) dance, taught them by the Yaquis.

This dancer represents a timid deer, hopping up and down to the time of a rattle held in the right hand, and the chanting of the singers. The *venado* dancers stooped over frequently, turning first to one side and then the other to look behind. Manuel Encina was the *venado* and Chico Romero, a very large young Seri, acted the part of a coyote, crawling and jumping on all fours and barking and every once in a while biting the calf or thigh of the *venado*, then jumping back and barking. It was acted with great realism, and the onlookers, especially the children, enjoyed it immensely.

A wilder, more barbaric scene was probably seldom witnessed in America than this gathering of Seris on the shores of the Gulf of California, dancing the *venado*. The camp fire threw a flickering light over dark fierce faces with low foreheads and frowsy unkempt hair.
[302] One man, Luis Torres, the head "ship carpenter" with a moustache and chin beard, his hair low-down framing his dark face, looked like a savage from the wilds of New Guinea. Another, Santo Blanco, a secondary chief below Juan Tomas, has a straggling moustache curling over cruel projecting lips which rarely smile, while his fierce black eyes peering through his black thatch of hair, have a perpetual scowl. The monotonous sing-song chant accompanied by the soft roar of the surf added an indescribable eeriness and weirdness to the dark night.

123 We soon turned in as it was then eleven o'clock, and we all fell asleep lulled by the waves of the sea.

10: Davis E-5 (1922-ca.1939) 1965 NU31 Seri NU31

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Seri Indians at home

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Seri Indians preparing their meal

123 261 We were up long before the sun, the following day the eighth of March, but the baking of bread delayed our breakfast, so that while we ate, forty Indians were looking on at us. Little ones with streaming hair and fluttering shirt tails, paddled over the sand hills as fast as their brown legs could carry them in their fear of being late. Women in patched and ragged skirts hurried and plowed through the sand and over thorny mesquite brush to be in time---for what? To see the *gringos* eat their breakfast and to possibly pick up a few crumbs. Each grain of corn, each bean, even a piece of dough half the size of a dime is precious and carefully garnered and eaten.

To eat under the devouring eyes of these people who rarely have enough to eat and most of the time not half enough, to see the hungry dog-like look as I tried to swallow a piece of bread, to see the children half start up as if to run and seize it and watch the mothers jerk them back, to see them eye hungrily our sacks of provisions and not dart to touch them, is enough to make one choke.

Any bread left over we broke into little chunks and gave to the children. I then gave each child two lumps of cube sugar. A little later, as they would hide their sugar and try to repeat, I lined up fifteen or twenty eager, frowsy bare-legged boys and girls and gave each an orange.

123 439 Later, the mother would trade a basket or a hair brush for an orange, a knife for two oranges. They brought Pelican skin rugs made from six Pelican hides sewed together which used to form their kilts. For these I traded four yards of *manta*, or cotton goods, of which they made garments.

I soon had a thriving trade on hand, especially in necklaces. I had bought a few cheap glass bead necklaces at fifteen cents each. These set them wild. For native necklaces of seeds I traded the bead ones. I secured most of the necklaces, and when they ran out the children were sent by their mothers into the brush to gather more beans and seeds. These were hastily strung and hung around the neck and exposed to my admiring gaze, but it was useless as I would not trade any more beads. I had to save them for the Seris on the Island. I would have given everything away there.

Also, I had to consider the moral effect of them securing things without effort on their part. Only for service, must we pay in food or goods. For bringing food, water, to go hunting for us, or for trade---except giving things to the little children. It was heart-breaking, but they were lucky to have water. Like many others less primitive, they work, hunt, fish, only when hunger drives them.

231 With the people were a crowd of undersized, starved, bony dogs. A Seri cleans up everything and the dogs get the rest. Each day they are gnawing on some old fish head that is long past having any nourishment, and is tough and strong as rawhide, but hope springs eternal in an Indian dog's heart or stomach, and again and again, will they search out an old fish head or Pelican bone. Discouraged, never!

000 search out an old fish head or Pelican bone. Discouraged, never!

123 223 We had intended going to Alcatraz *(Pelican Island)* and have the Indians secure more skins for us at night, but the wind was strong and not favorable, so the trip was put off. The Indians hold up torches of dry *pitahalla*, while another Indian knocks the Pelicans over the head.

123 224 Stan and three Indians started out for the *picachos* with rifles in a hunt for mountain lions and a *tigre* our Indian said he saw. They returned in the afternoon tired and hungry and carrying no game. Stan had mounted the highest peak, an almost perpendicular one, and dangerous climb.

123 513 One member of the hunting party, Santo Blanco *(Holy White)* which belies his name---as he is neither white nor holy---evidently didn't find his dinner waiting for him, and proceeded to beat up his poor wife. Perhaps she didn't expect him so soon or perhaps the larder was empty. At any rate, another woman, Luis Torres' wife, flew to her assistance and grabbed the rifle or stick and he cut her hand cruelly with his knife. She was brought whimpering to our camp, her poor thin hand dripping blood. One or two sympathizing women, crying softly, followed her.

I immediately put some flour over the cut and tore up strips of cotton goods and wrapped them round and round her hand, then pressed the veins to check the hemorrhage, and held her hand up. After fifteen or twenty minutes it ceased to drip, and an Indian brought me some mentholatum from my grip. I bathed her hand in salt water while she whimpered softly, put on the salve and re-wrapped her hand in clean goods and she returned to her camp. Her child picked up the discarded bloody clothes and took them to her.

123 Roberto had gone back for the things he had left, and at noon had returned with the car to Santa Cruz, intending to return by mule in the evening. He returned long after dark after five hours in the saddle. He had been bucked off once and lost in a jungle of timber, both down and standing for two hours. He was fenced inside this tangle, he said, finding it almost impossible to escape.

The mule was later to be tied up, rolled into the boat and taken to the Island for my use, so I would not get worn out walking and carrying food and water.

Again, we were lulled to sleep by the murmur of the sea.

On account of unfavorable conditions, we did not start in the boat the next morning, but fully expected to start the following morning. After breakfast we decided to give the Indians a feast. One Seri secured a five-gallon can three-quarters filled with water, and one by one I poured four cups of flour in it. I hesitated a moment and the Indian said "too much water," and all the crowd waited with bated breath. When I poured in an extra cup-full a great sigh of

[text continues on p. 200]

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Santo Blanco and Edward B. Davis - this hombre gambled away his only shirt - Sonora - 1929

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Seri method of carrying infant

123 relief and contentment rose, and everybody smiled. This concoction I placed on the fire while the Indian stirred with a long stick. It took half an hour to cook into a thick sticky paste, gummy white.

[415] Meanwhile, the women vanished and returned with various vessels: greasy baskets, a black chamber pot, frying pans, ollas, stew pots, shells, any old thing---even a cuspidor. When ready, the Indians dipped the sticky mess out with a cup into the various vessels and the women and children licked it up. Some of the children covered the back of a large clam shell with the paste and then licked it off, repeating this until it was gone. Most of the people hooked their fingers into it and licked them off time and again. Any drip on the outside was carefully licked off that four gallons of goo. I do not think one single drop was lost.

126 123 As one little girl was carrying away a clam shell of paste I secured her photograph. It was a sight not soon to be forgotten, to watch these little ones dip in their fingers, mostly two, sometimes three fingers and contentedly lick them off.

Wishing to secure a photo of the Indians in Pelican skin kilts, Roberto induced Chico Romero to strip and wrap a kilt of Pelican skins around his waist. He did this and Roberto secured a good photograph. For this service, Chico demanded three oranges which he gave to his children.

By coaxing and wheedling and joking, Roberto finally persuaded a young woman to put on the Pelican kilt, and she gradually pulled off her shirt, or waist, or whatever name it goes by, and laughingly permitted it. As her brown shoulders and breasts were exposed she covered them with her arms and hands while I took the photo. I gave her some blue powder to decorate herself and a little round mirror.

372 Chico Romero made a fire drill out of a piece of dry driftwood from a cottonwood tree, and then made a fire by turning the stick between his hands. After three or four minutes the fine dust became punk and turned into a live coal. This he carefully put in some dry grass and by holding it up in the wind it was fanned into a flame. The price of this was a red bandanna.

372 773 825 The legend of Fire was told to me later by the campfire. The Seris' god sent down a fly to Seriland to show the Indians how to make fire. The fly was pointed out to me one day. It was a trifle larger than a house fly with a body of shining green and blue.

"Now," they said to me, "notice when it lands. Did you not see it take its two hands, rub them over its head and then rub them together a few times?". . ."Each time it settles it rubs its hands together, and our Indians noticed this and in this way we were taught by this little fly how to make fire by rubbing a stick between our two hands, back and forth. One fly came to earth and found something dead and he rubbed a stick between his hands and made a smoke signal

so all the other flies could see and also come to this dead thing.''

A few weeks ago, Antonio Herrera had a very vivid dream. He dreamed that he was hunting in the mountains for deer and came across a cave. (These volcanic mountains are pitted with caves.) He went into the cave and saw all kinds of things dear to the heart of a Seri---plenty of rifles, lots of cartridges, knives, *manta* (unbleached cotton), necklaces, red bandannas, blue overalls, *plata*, or silver, and many other things.

When he awoke he sought his father Manuel Encinas, who is a medicine man and interpreter of dreams, to explain his dream to him. The price demanded by Manuel was six *tiras*---or 30-30 cartridges, a very high price, according to Seri standard. The explanation was this:

It was true that the cave was there and all the things in it just as seen and described by Antonio, but in order to find it he would have to fast nine days and go without water that length of time also, in the heat of summer. Then the way would appear to reach the cave. So far, Antonio has not attempted the fast.

I witnessed the operation of making a certain kind of pitch or tar which the Seris use to make the seams in their canoes or boats tight. The women pound up the dried pulp next to the outside skin of a dead *pitahalla* cactus (organ cactus). This is very dry and brown in color and the pieces are pounded up to a dry powder with a wash or shore rock in a dried deer hide. This is placed in a *batello*, or flat basket, and manipulated so that the coarse pieces come to the top and are scraped off and thrown away. The fine powder is then put in a five gallon can and some porpoise or sea-lion oil or horse oil is poured on it and stirred into a thick gummy mass. When thoroughly mixed it is put over the fire, in an olla, to boil and continually stirred for an hour or two until it is the consistency and has the appearance of coal tar. While being worked it is kept heated and applied to seams inside and outside the boat. It hardens just like tar and answers the same purpose.

Since the corn, which had kept this band of Seris in food, disappeared two days before we came, and they had barely kept going on seeds and a few fish, and they all had decided to leave camp with us in the morning---the women walking and the men and some children in boats---it was necessary to supply them with some food to take them to the hunting grounds of the *cahuama*, or sea turtles, and land them on the Island. The *cahuama* would furnish them meat---their favorite and national food, and the shores would supply them with clams, oysters, crabs and other sea food.

So the whole band was called around our camp and each family was furnished with two cups of corn, two of beans, some green coffee and a cup of cube sugar. For the first time our camp was free of Indians, and we ate and went to bed in peace.

The amenities of civilization were laid aside and forgotten in

123 our rough camping, and we lived more or less like the natives, along the lines of least resistance. Shaving was unknown; washing the hands took place possibly every few days---the face never; teeth never; hair combed never; dressed, always in bed and out. We did not shed our shoes. Our revolvers were our constant bedfellows and lay in the blankets next to our right hands. But the Seris have never made a move to take the least thing that was not given to them, and made not a hostile move or look. I did see a child surreptitiously wet his fingers and wipe them across the open flour sack and lick them off, but even then his mother pulled him back.

123 484 By starlight the next morning we were up again, and ate our breakfast before sun-up. We loaded most of the groceries and things in our boat, including about eighteen gallons of water. Besides ourselves, we took Luis Torres and his wife as helper and boat-steerer. This gave us a very heavy load. Chico Romero planned to take twenty gallons of water and one sack of flour and half beans and corn, and follow in his boat.

The Seri camp was a busy place, women carrying things to the boats and preparing to leave. The camp was stripped. Much water was taken in the boats to supply the families, who for the most part walked along the shore and made short cuts through the hills, planning to meet the boats at appointed places. Two other boats started with us.

The wind was dead ahead, so our sail was useless and we unshipped the mast, and three of the men took the long oars with Luis Torres at the helm and in the bow. The boat leaked quite a great deal and it [502] kept Lupe busy bailing. Chico Romero's boat was manned at the oars by two small boys about seven or nine, and he steered with a paddle. In the other boat were three men at the paddles, three children, two dogs, cans of water and baskets and cooking things.

[501] The wind kicked up quite a heavy sea for the small Seri craft, but this narrow, heavily-laden craft met the swells and floated over them gracefully, although oftentimes the water missed coming over the gunwale by an inch or two. The children laughed gleefully, showing even rows of white teeth innocent of brush and tooth powder.

123 On rounding one rocky point three deer stood outlined against the sky, and we landed three men to try and get one, Stan among them. They returned empty-handed, except Stan, who kept ashore and followed over the hills to try for game.

At noon we landed on a beautiful sandy shore laced by the green waters of the Sea of Cortez, with Tiburon Island opposite a few miles distant. Here we unloaded and built a fire of driftwood and cooked our dinner. Stan found us---without his deer---and we ate very heartily. Beans, bread, coffee. We camped here for the night in this delightful little cove, calm and protected from the strong wind outside. Green sea, purple mountains, cloudless blue sky, a little freedom from hordes of staring Indians.

123 484 Then Chico Romero and his load of children and dogs arrived and he unloaded his impediments on the beach, and soon the women came walking along the beach and joined the party. The boats carrying the heavy things and children; the women, with their babies and a few light things on their heads, walk along the beach when possible and follow the boats, which hug the shore to avoid the strong currents and tide. The boats are propelled by paddles mostly, though some of the Indians use oars. The women are slightly built, slender and inclined to be gaunt, owing to the hard life and lack of food. Their cheek bones are quite prominent and their profiles present protruding lips.

422 [364] Having no permanent homes, moving hither and thither for their various food supply, household things are not accumulated and life is reduced to its very simplest elements and absolute necessities.

Crude baskets made from shoots of the torote tree, vessels in which to cook, and some patched rags in place of Pelican skins to serve as blankets to the fortunate few, constitute the family possessions. Strange to relate, many of the women have an over-supply of milk, and according to Roberto have puppies nurse what the babies cannot take. One woman was known to nurse a baby pig on one side and a puppy on the other.

[247] [884] Family dogs lick all cooking vessels which is unnecessary as they are thoroughly clean when the Seris are through with them, and also lick the infants clean after performing their natural functions, so they are quite indispensable. I saw a Seri girl place on the sand a small can of water for a dog and then saw her drink some of the remainder and pour the rest back in a five-gallon can. Dogs frequently swim across the Infernillo to join their masters.

732 Asked about cripples and incompetents, Roberto said they probably did not exist. The conditions of survival were too precarious to admit of anyone living who was unable, by physical disability, to hunt or fish. There are two or three men who are nearly blind or so. The wives of these men eke an uncertain living for them by the hardest struggle. The sea turtle is the staple; one man and one good boat can secure a living for five families. There are now nine boats, but one boat to a family would practically free them from continual want. With the exception of four bones in the flippers and the bones of the head, all the sea turtle is used---the meat, blood, entrails, shell which furnishes food and oil, skin of flippers which furnishes sandals, sinew for strings. Nothing is wasted except contents of the entrails.

123 Again, we laid our blankets on the clean white sand of the shore and were lulled to rest by the murmuring sea.

123 484 Daylight found us up the next morning, and we breakfasted, rolled up our blankets, pushed the boats into the sea and were off by the time the sun rose over the mountains and shone over a glassy sea. Two Seris towed their boat by a tump line, while a boy of twelve steered

123 it from shore by a paddle. A little child in the boat sat still as a
484 mouse. No matter how the boat rocked, it never whimpered or cried. All the children stayed perfectly quiet in the frail crafts, in the very positions in which they were placed.

123 Once the boat approached shore to secure a small octopus for fish
484 bait. One was finally located by Stanley, who could see its eyes
136 shining with a baleful purple light under a large boulder in about
[120] eighteen inches of water. The Seri got out and pinned it down with an oar, while Roberto pounded it time and time again with another oar. Even then it escaped in a cloud of sepia which it discharged. Its tentacles were easily a foot in length, and its color was the bottom of the sea. If it once gets a grip on a rock it is practically impossible to tear it loose.

Schools of porpoises played close to the boat each day, curving up to breathe and throw spray and then diving lazily below the surface, frequently gliding like a dark shadow below the waves. Sometimes, in the sheer joy of living, they would leap clear of the water and splash back in a spray of foam.

123 We soon reached the extreme point where it juts from the Sonora
484 shore, landed and set a signal smoke to notify other Seris on the
[108] Island. (A dry *pitahalla* cactus was selected for a black smoke.) No answering signal came. We crossed the narrow channel, the Infernillo, a little over a mile wide, the water like a mill pond, and landed on the sheltered side and unloaded on the stony beach. For miles the beach was covered by windrows of round wave-worn rocks and pebbles of all beautiful colors and sizes mingled with strange shells and seaweed. Here we made camp and stayed overnight.

The Indian canoe landed its cargo of women, children and dogs a little later, and established a camp adjoining. Three little boys were commissioned to secure us some clams and they returned in a while with a pail of clams, one crab and some oysters. These were boiled in salt water, the meat extracted and Pancho Oliverria cooked them in rice for supper. The crab was my especial delicacy.

123 Roberto and Stanley walked off after dinner to hunt in the mountains a few miles back from the coast, and they returned long after dark very weary from carrying, for seven miles, a young burro deer which they had shot. The Indians soon gathered around it chattering volubly, as both they and ourselves had eaten no meat for several days. We gave them nearly three-fourths of it, reserving a hind quarter and some ribs for ourselves. Rafael Feliz and Chico, with skill born of long practice, skinned and unjointed the animal in a very short time, and devoured a good part of their share in a cooking pot a little later, although they had eaten only a little while before. The boys cracked the bones and scraped the marrow, eating it like candy.

[484] At six thirty the next morning, we were crowded in the boats again

123 and on our way, headed south, rounding the point with the tide in our
484 favor. It was a rowing proposition. During mornings the sea is calm and the swells glassy. Usually at noon the wind comes up, mostly ahead and against us. Last night we could see the light of a camp fire on the point opposite us, and soon we spied a boat headed for the Island. We had left the women and older children to walk and they met us where we landed. At noon we camped for dinner in a lovely cove, and soon three other boats joined us with their cargoes of women, children and dogs. We ate quickly and got under way again as soon as possible, and even then we were the last boat. The trip was bad, as all the people were loaded in the boats which made them low in the water.

123 It was a pretty sight to see the Seris in their *pangas*, boats
484 shaped like dories, graceful, narrow and swift, kneel in the bottom
501 and dip their broad paddles into the waves and shoot into the open sea like dark-skinned Vikings, wild hair flying.

As soon as we emerged from the cove the wind and tide struck us dead ahead, and progress was slow although the swells were behind us. After rounding a point the wind blew on the forward quarter and all the boats, now increased to five, hoisted their sails. We also stepped our mast, sheeted our flour-sack sail, and bowled through the sea, carrying a bone in our mouth.

Chico's boat ahead had no sail and when we neared it, steered with superb skill by the wild-looking Seri, Luis Torres, he had a tow line aboard and thereafter we held him in tow until finally the wind shifted dead ahead and all the boats lowered their sails, unstepped their masts and began paddling. One *pangah* had a sail with part of it loose and flapping at the top like a flag. Roberto said the Seris did not want to cut off this useless piece for fear of spoiling the sail, so there it flapped whenever the sail was sheeted home.

123 About three thirty in the afternoon we rounded a bold rocky point
484 and entered a beautiful curving bay of quiet water, and here we landed for the night camp. Soon all the boats were unloaded. Men and children hunted driftwood for camp fires, two boats at our insistence set off fishing, and Stan and three Seris took their rifles and went hunting. All parties later returned without fish or game, so, as our meat had disappeared like a beautiful dream, we had to dig into our corn and flour to feed thirty or forty hungry Indians. The children stood about like a bunch of hungry cormorants and we promised them *pinole*, or flour paste.

123 Looking at these half naked children with their swarthy little
177 bosoms bare and most of them bare from the waist down, I dug out some safety pins and began with the little girl Luz, who was vigorously stirring the paste mass and pinned her waist over her bare breast and tummy with two bright safety pins. She never ceased stirring. Each bare breast I pinned the shirt over as the night was chilly. The children quick to catch on and keen with desire born of privation, each pulled his or her shirt open even when it had a button, or had

177 been fastened with a string---each child eager for a safety pin. A
123 little child two and a half years old was shoved forward for a pin, its round black eyes dancing with anticipation, but its dress had no opening in front, so I laughed and shook my head and everyone appreciated the joke. But, not to be defeated, a little girl untied the child's waist from behind and spread it open, exposing its little brown body from head to feet, and called my earnest attention to it. I then pinned up the dress. Then the older ones crowded around me, but I had used up a whole paper of pins, so I shook my head. I gave the empty paper to an eager child, although a dozen hands were outstretched for it. By making the children happy I pleased the parents.

123 By this time the flour soup was thick and ready, and Roberto baled it out with a cup into the various vessels eagerly outstretched to receive it. As the cup would drip, little hands caught the priceless drops before they reached the sand. As each got his proportion he began sticking his fingers into the mess and licking them off. Many took their *pinole* to camp and the others secured a taste also. A small piece of bread dropped into the sand was snatched up, by a child, from under the nose of a dog. She rubbed off the sand and devoured it.

When all had vanished to their various camps I opened the box of candies---small round drops of green, red and yellow. I filled our coffee pot and went to each camp and gave each man, woman and child about ten candies.

439 Since I wanted shell necklaces, the women had combed the beaches
123 and gathered plenty of shells, and strung them while resting. This evening they were draped about their necks, and they wished to trade, so I traded for about a dozen---one small round mirror for one, five needles for another, five safety pins for another, blue face paint for another. Mirrors were most in favor.

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206 *Seri outside beauty parlor*

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Maria Jesusa - Great grand-daughter of Lola Casanova and Coyote Iguana. She is self-conscious and embarrassed to face the white man's magic box for the first time. Her face is decorated in blue, in a typical Seri design. Her features are more regular and attractive than the pure Seri and her clothing shows more taste and pride than her half sisters. Taken at La Cruz, island of Tiburon---E.H.D.

10: Davis E-5 (1922-ca. 1939) 1965 NU31 Seri NU31

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[301]

Seri beauties

10: Davis E-5 (1922-ca.1939) 1965 NU31 Seri NU31

133

Sunrise - Tiburon Island - 1936

10: Davis E-5 (1922-ca. 1939) 1965 NU31 Seri NU31

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Juan Tomas - Chief of Seris, 1922

10:Davis E-5 (1922-ca.1939) 1965 NU31 Seri NU31

War Chief of the Seris

622 765 There is sorrow and mourning on that little known island in the Gulf of California, Tiburon.

[164] During the last few years, many of the Seri tribesmen have succumbed to influenza and pneumonia, and many a night has the weird and melancholy wailing for the dead mingled with the soft lapping of the waters of the Gulf on the shores of that lovely desert isle.

But now a universal grief has overtaken the remnants of a once powerful and warlike tribe---Juan Tomas (*Pik-ta-aohe*, "Very Brave" in his own language)---the old War Chief of the Seris, is no more. He has fought a last and losing battle. For a month, maybe for several months, the women will wail and lament, and around the tribal camp fires, for many a night, the Seris will tell of his exploits and miraculous escapes, as they told Roberto Thomson, their friend and advisor.

[164] The old Chief died on the shores of Kino Bay opposite Alcatraz Island, probably of pneumonia.

There was no soft mattress to lie upon, no pillow to rest his head, and no roof to shelter him from sun or storm. His bed was the sand of the sea shore; his canopy, the blue heavens above, and his [163] requiem, the solemn beating of the surf on the shore. His last words were to his grand-nephews to inherit the *Sierra de las Tinajas*, and he asked the Indians and his *Yori* (Mexican) friends to protect his nephews and the mountains.

622 764 His body was wrapped in an old *serape*, fastened around by rope of native fibre. His grave was dug with paddles from the canoes, four and one-half feet deep in the sand hills near the sea. He was placed in the grave with his head to the north, face up, with the carapace of a sea turtle covering his head. Amid much lamentation and mourning, the grave was partially filled, and then a heavy layer of *cholla* cactus spread over. The grave was then filled and mounded up and covered with *chollas*, *mesquite*, shells, and thorny growths, and also a five-gallon can. The cactus spines were to discourage coyotes.

622 Thus passed a very striking character among the primitive races of Sonora, Mexico. He was brave and fearless in battle; crafty, cautious, and cunning in attack; cruel and merciless to his enemies. He was rarely caught off his guard, and always managed to extricate himself and his men from difficult situations. He was quick to think and act, and was wise with the wisdom learned at first hand on desert and sea from a rugged nature, reluctant to give up her secrets. He was a master hand at *balsa* building, a good hunter, fisherman, harpooner of *cahuana* (sea turtle), a good surfman, a good gambler, and an expert [575] tracker. It was not unusual to possess two or three wives, but the old Chief, while married three times, had only one wife at a time. He was quite fond of the writer, and used to greet him with the true Mexican *abrazo*.

[123] It was in 1922 that I first met the grim old warrior on the shores of Tiburon, whither I had gone on a quest for the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, New York.

[142] He was very dark, of medium height, thick set, with a broad, deep chest, very muscular, with shaggy brows and deep set eyes which, even at that age, ninety years, burned like coals of fire, and were sus- [302] picious and wary. He wore a braided pigtail down his back which con- 290 tained a few gray hairs. For clothing, he wore a ragged shirt and an [411] old pair of overalls, with a short kilt hanging from a belt, through which stuck a long naked knife of hoop iron, ground on abrasive rocks and keen as a razor.

[291] From infancy to the grave, the freedom of his feet was never [484] hampered by shoes. Even at that advanced age, and until his last illness, he was perfectly able to care for himself, and follow his nomadic tribe on its devious trails along the coast and far in the interior. A walk of a hundred miles was not unusual. For ten rifle cartridges a Seri Indian once walked forty or fifty miles to deliver my message to Juan Tomas. From the time we first met, our friendship was never broken.

The Pelican Skin Robe

133

Toshne or Pelican Island - Kino Bay - 1936

It was the dark of the moon and a very black night, ideal for surprising the Pelicans asleep, roosting on the steep slope above the waters of the Sea of Cortez. The Pelican is a very wary bird and cannot be approached in the light of the moon. 123 223

At sundown we had climbed several hundred feet to the saddle between two peaks on the Island of Alcatraz in Kino Bay off the coast of Sonora. We rolled up in our blankets and hugged the great volcanic rocks at the crest, to be as inconspicuous as possible to the great birds circling the peaks to seek a roosting place on the west slope of the Island.

Santo Blanco had provided himself with a torch made from the slender rods of a dead *pitahella* (organ) cactus which he had tied together in a long bundle. The four young Seris who joined him also had a torch and in addition, each had provided himself with a club. We took no fire arms. Senor Roberto Thomson, my companion, had arranged this trip with Santo Blanco, for my benefit. [416] [824]

[text continues on p. 215]

10: Davis E-5 (1922-ca. 1939) 1965 NU31 Seri NU31

Chico Romero - Seri dressed in Pelican skins - 1926

142
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Seri Concha in Pelican skin robe or shirt - 1926

123 It was March and the night wind was cold, but we did not dare light
223 a fire, so we hugged our blankets close to us for warmth until Santo Blanco judged the Pelicans were sound asleep. We could hear the waters of the Gulf roaring softly as they broke against the cliffs far below us.

At midnight Santo Blanco lighted his torch and the other Indians
[21] did likewise. They all wore rawhide sandals to keep their feet from being cut on the sharp rocks. Santo Blanco was agile as a cat, as he jumped from rock to rock on the steep slope holding his torch over head. Part way down the party split, leaving Santo Blanco, Roberto and myself. I had a flashlight which threw a feeble ray on nearby
[134] rocks and then shot off into blackness. The rocks were slippery from droppings of thousands of cormorants, gulls, Pelicans and other sea birds and climbing down rocks on the steep slope and that on a dark night, was risky if not dangerous, for if we slipped or missed our footing, we might roll, bump a few times and drop from a high cliff into the sea.

Santo Blanco was far below us and at last we could hear him clubbing Pelicans over the head and by the time we reached him he had several dead Pelicans spread on the rocks and he was bringing in the last of them near where we had stopped.

There lay five of these great silver gray birds, each boasting a wing spread of ten feet, as against seven feet of the golden eagle. The flashlight picked them out, one by one, with their long necks, long bills, and with pouches on the nether mandibles for temporary storage of their catch. They are very awkward and ungainly as they stand in groups on rocks at the edge of the tide, but when their great pinions are spread in flight over the sea, they are the epitome of grace.

That was a heavy load, over one hundred pounds, for one man to pack up those steep slippery rocks. I suggested that we help Santo Blanco to the top, but Roberto said the Pelicans were covered with lice and it was not advisable, but with Santo a few more or less made no difference. So he tied the birds together and swung them over his shoulders leaving his hands free for climbing. His torch had burned out and our only light was my flashlight to pick out hand and foot holds. At times we would reach down and give him a lift where the rocks were steepest, but for the most part he struggled alone. Sometimes he would find a few steps like a stairway and then he would look for an easy way, using both hands to pull himself up, but there was no easy way. It was a herculean task to climb those slippery rocks and one time the load almost pulled him over backward, but he recovered his balance and finally the crest of the hill was reached and the rest was down hill on an easy trail.

The boys already had a camp fire going near the beach and as soon as Santo deposited his load, they all fell to and began skinning the

[text continues on p. 217]

10: Davis E-5 (1922-ca. 1939) 1965 NU31 Seri NU31

114
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237

Edward H. Davis and Pelican skin robe made for him by Seri Indians - 1934

123 223 [262] birds. As soon as the skin was off the breast was laid on top of the coals and roasted. The meat was red as raw beef, but it was free of fishy flavor and tasted excellent. The Indians ate pelican flesh till daylight.

252 [123] We gave them a generous helping of flour in a pail and this with water from a canteen, Santo stirred vigorously with a stick and then kneaded the dough with his hands until it was of the right consistency. He rolled hunks of this into little balls of dough about the size of golf balls, which he laid on his blanket. The boys picked these up, patted them flat like pancakes, scraped away ashes and sand from the edge of the fire, placed their pancakes in the hollow, covered them with hot ashes and hot sand, and in about three minutes pulled them out all baked brown. They shook the ashes and sand from them, leaving them clean and ready to eat. I am telling this in detail to show how simple cooking can be done without a dutch-oven, frying pan, or cooking grease, far from civilization.

281 [123] We were soon paddled across to their village on the shores of Kino Bay and the skins turned over to Mrs. Santo. The skins had been split down the back, leaving the breast unmarred. The wings and legs had already been removed, and she sewed the skins together with sinew recovered from the birds. The boys had secured an extra pelican making six, three to a side, then placed together and sewed lengthwise, making a robe three and a half feet wide by seven feet long.

[342] [291] [301]

Pegging out and drying a Pelican skin robe by a Seri Indian woman - 1936

281 The Indians made a mound of sand full length of the robe and amply wide rounding off the top. On this the robe was spread, flesh side up, and pinned to the mound by slender slivers of *carrizo* and left exposed to the sun. The skins were singularly free from oil or fat and in a few hours, the robe was cured. The pins removed, the sand shaken from the plumage, and it was ready to use as a blanket covering at night or in old times, as clothing wrapped around the body.

The robes of silvery gray are from male Pelicans and are larger and more attractive than robes from the female birds, which have white breasts, edged with gray.

291 177 Before the garments and costumes of civilization encroached on the Seris, Pelican robes and deer skins were the only clothing worn by the natives, but now they have adopted civilized ways to a great extent, Pelican robes as clothing became obsolete.

10:Davis E-5 (1922-ca.1939) 1965 NU31 Seri NU31

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batea--winnowing basket
batello--flat basket
cahuama--sea turtles, used as food by the Seri
guaraches--rawhide sandals
palanca--shoulder poles, used in carrying water
pangas--Seri boats shaped like dories
piojo--body lice